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FROM THE FUND OF
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WESTMINSTER ABBEY;

OR,

THE DAYS OF THE REFORMATION.

Westminster Abbey;

OR,

THE DAYS OF THE REFORMATION.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "WHITEFRIARS," "CÆSAR BORGIA," &c.

Emma [illegible]

Struggling in dark eclipse, and shooting day
On either side of the black orb that veiled it!

DRYDEN.

Quid non potest simulata religio!

ERASMUS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WESTMINSTER ABBEY;

OR,

The Days of the Reformation.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRETHREN OF JESUS.

These were the prime, in order and in might.
MILTON.

THE doctrines of the German Reformers made but little progress in England until after the close of the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The press was as yet but a giant in the cradle, murmuring inarticulate thunder; and, promulgated in a foreign, or in a learned tongue, the opinions of Luther and his adherents could have produced but slight effect on the illiterate masses of the English people.

It was the leaven of Wicliffe which, fermenting during a century and a half in the popular mind, produced symptoms in our island

that long preceded the volcanic outburst of the Reformation on the Continent, in that age also which it was destined to render for ever memorable in the annals of mankind. Of this glory of precedence we ought not to be deprived by the greatness of the events and personages set in motion by the German revolt, though, like the Gospel itself, the English Reformation commenced among the poor and the lowly. Shoemakers, carpenters, and husbandmen, a solitary citizen of London, were the first champions and martyrs in the insurrection of reason against authority among us years before Luther threw his massive gauntlet at the feet of Rome. But the flames or the pruninghook had apparently destroyed those offshoots of the still stubborn stumps of the ancient innovation, when the new outlandish doctrines struck root where they could be least expected to find congenial soil. About the period mentioned, both the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge fell under suspicion of favouring the opinions of the German Reformers, and Cambridge in particular.

In this University a theological party had gradually risen into notice, which excited the animadversion and alarm of the monks and

bigots who formed by far the majority in it. Yet it was chiefly composed of priests and doctors of the Church it was imagined its members were secretly at work to undermine—men distinguished by their learning and abilities. They fulfilled their clerical offices diligently, complied with all established ceremonial, and were the most zealous and ardent preachers the times had known. But their pulpits resounded, like those of Northern Germany, with declamations against abuses they alleged to exist in the Church, and which, indeed, the boldest of its defenders could scarcely venture to deny. They even dared, though in very guarded language, to examine the most received formulas of belief, and finally to impugn what was, at least numerically, the orthodox manner of interpretation. They affected a new style of teaching, no longer applying themselves to the subtleties of scholastic disputation, or adopting the writings of the fathers and ancient doctors as the text-books of commentary. The Bible, in all their appeals to authority, took the place which those theologians, the Master of the Sentences, Thomas Aquinas, and others of the ancient schoolmen, held in the discourses of their contemporaries. And not

satisfied, apparently, with the translation of the Scriptures approved by the Church, old as well as young among them applied with great zeal to the study of the original languages in which the sacred writings are couched. This, in conjunction with an admiring research into the lately recovered treasures of classical antiquity, was contemptuously denominated the New Learning by the partisans of the ancient order of things.

It was no marvel that admirers and students of the New Learning should come under orthodox suspicion. In the hands of the German Reformers it furnished the most formidable and dazzling of the weapons employed against the champions of the Papacy. It was the unwearied delight and solicitude of the Voltaire of the 16th century, Erasmus, who barbed and polished his destructive wit in its armouries. It was no sufficient ground for tolerance with the bigoted supporters of the ancient superstitions, that a man who aspired to become the chief of orthodoxy throughout the Christian world warmly encouraged the pursuit. Cardinal Wolsey, indeed, who, at that time, as *legate-à-latere*, was supreme head of the English Church, laboured with shortsighted policy

to render the New Learning as universal among the champions of the decaying system as among the innovators. Possibly he imagined that moral light could be directed at will, like that of physical nature, by a species of intellectual sunglasses, to blind and thwart an adversary. But his own orthodoxy had long been held in suspicion by the English clergy, over whom he domineered with more than papal pride and despotism, and for whose persons and opinions he scarcely deigned to conceal his contempt. He had himself assailed some of their most valuable privileges, and established a fatal precedent in the confiscation of certain minor monastic endowments for the support of the schools he founded at Ipswich and Oxford.

There were other circumstances of suspicion against the Cambridge doctors, not the least of which might be considered the secrecy and union remarkable among the members of the rising sect. These characteristics, and the accident of their meetings being chiefly held in an apartment belonging to one of their number in the college of the name, procured them—certainly with no intentional compliment—a sneering appellation which they yet joyfully accepted of the "Brethren of Jesus."

In addition to all these reasons for mistrust, the brethren seemed to regard, in the light of apostle and leader, a man who, for a long period, had been held in opprobrium in the University, as the first who openly avowed contempt of their favourite studies, and recommended attention to those of their adversaries. This man was Bilney, whose impassioned zeal and final martyrdom have entitled him to a leader's glory in the great struggle, in spite of his faltering resistance—even terrified abandonment of the field—in the solitary conflict he found himself called upon to sustain with the mighty and organized battalia of the power he ventured to assail.

About the time our record commences, in the autumn of 1527, Bilney had just returned to Cambridge, after a long imprisonment, a recantation, and degrading public exposure in London. These punishments he incurred, it is probable, chiefly by provoking the personal indignation of Wolsey. The English Reformers had scarcely as yet evinced any doctrinal or dogmatic revolt; and in general the Cardinal showed an inclination to remedy the abuses they most vehemently decried. But Bilney's invectives against the arrogance and

vices of the superior clergy were dexterously interpreted by his enemies into audacious assaults on Wolsey himself and his overblown power. Accordingly, the weight of ecclesiastical vengeance, in the hands of a man who wielded the supreme authority both in Church and State, was directed against the offender. Bilney was summoned before the absolute court established by Wolsey in virtue of his commission as Legate, and condemned either to recant his opinions or perish for them at the stake.

Nature, and the persuasions of friends more anxious for the safety of the Reformer than the assertion of his principles, triumphed over enthusiasm in the soul of Bilney. He yielded to their suggestions and the terrors of his menaced doom. But the furies of antiquity avenged not the blood of Clytemnestra on her son and slayer with more relentless and unceasing serpent-thongs than the consciousness of his apostacy tormented Bilney. It drove him finally to court martyrdom, as the only redemption from the superior agonies of his spirit; and at the time we allude to, had sent him back to Cambridge, on the verge of insanity with remorse and grief.

It was therefore not without cause that the former associates, and still compassionating and sympathizing friends of Bilney, were regarded with constantly increasing suspicion and dislike in the University. But the punishment and recantation of their leader seemed to produce a great effect in thinning the ranks of the alleged schismatics. Few, indeed, were found faithful among all those who, incited by the love of novelty, or the more exalted thirst for truth, had joined in the mysterious movement whose shadowy advance excited so much apprehension. But of these few some, especially one or two of the younger members, rather increased in boldness and energy, as if anxious to diminish the ill effect of their leader's tergiversation. Among these were to be reckoned, in various degrees, a memorable group which assembled after supper and prayers—or even-song as it was called—in the chamber in Jesus College belonging to one of their number, and whence they derived their *sobriquet* in the University.

At first the company consisted only of three persons, one of whom was the owner of the apartment. He was a Doctor of Divinity and Fellow of the College, whose name had long

been in ill odour among the monastic authorities of Cambridge, not only for the supposed tendency of his opinions, but for certain circumstances of his early career. While studying theology with the view of entering a Church in which celibacy is one of the first obligations, Thomas Cranmer turned aside in a progress that excited the hopes of his superiors, to wed a beautiful girl, to whom he was fondly attached. He had attained a fellowship in his college, and a high reputation for learning and ability, was regarded with satisfaction and pride by his monastic patrons as a reinforcement of value to their now dangerously assaulted cause, when this untoward event deprived them of the instrument they thought secured.

The untimely death of his wife enabled Cranmer to return to his original dedication; but great obstacles and disadvantages awaited him on his regained path, in consequence of his brief wandering from it. These circumstances had doubtless their influence in directing his early attention to the doctrines of the Reformation, and in sustaining the perseverance with which at a later period he followed out their momentous consequences. But

the sorrows and mortifications of his youth had set their stamp, not only on his grave and saddened countenance, but in his character; and something of the wavering and indecision misfortune infuses into her victims might be observed in Cranmer's look and manner, as afterwards in the bending lines of his oblique but ever-advancing career. Though one of the most learned of the new religionists, Cranmer had as yet exhibited so little daring or enthusiasm in spreading the convictions he doubtless entertained even in that early phase of the Reformation, that Bilney often called him in playful chiding, the Dark Lantern. But educated like all the other founders of the Anglican Church, in the very bosom of the ancient superstitions, Cranmer was also too deeply imbued with the opinions and prejudices inculcated thereby to advance with rapid or extensive strides. He walked in chains. Few in fact of the English Reformers for a long period later, thought of assailing the fundamental doctrines of the Roman Church, still less of raising a new structure on its ruins with the sound materials of the demolition. Their projects as well as attacks seemed confined to the abuses that existed glaringly in the

practical and administrative forms of the ecclesiastical polity.

Cranmer was now in the sobered years of middle life; and of his two companions one was older, the other younger, than himself, by at least fifteen years respectively. The olde st was certainly the most cheerful and lively-looking of the party; and though he had passed his grand climacteric, few signs of decay darkened the lustre of his vigorous old age. His hair and pointed beard were indeed grizzled by time; but the bright expression of his countenance, the hale colour on his cheeks, the humour and vivacity in his glance, bore witness that the youth of the soul had survived that of the body. Sir Hugh Latimer, as he was styled in the usual clerical form of respect, was one of Bilney's earliest converts, but was previously renowned in the University for his fanatic adherence to the old doctrin es. So conspicuous had this partisanship rendered him, that he was appointed cross-bearer to the University—an office esteemed one of peculiar honour and religious distinction. But in latter times Latimer had turned all the power of his sarcastic wit, of his plenteous and popular-toned eloquence, to ridicule the superstitions

he was once the most earnest to promulge and glorify.

Nicholas Ridley, as yet a young man and a raw student, with the rough accent, and the open and determined character of the north of England stamped strongly in his features and speech as a blacksmith's designs in his stern metals, formed the third in the group assembled in an apartment which might have contented the austerity of a Carthusian. A plain iron lamp hung from the ceiling and dimly illumined the recesses of a large low chamber, whose deep-set lattices looked into a desolate cloister, once belonging to a nunnery, which Jesus College had originally been. A press, containing books and manuscripts religiously stored, a desk, a few high-backed wooden stools, and a truckle bed in a corner, comprised the entire inventory of the furniture of the future Primate of England.

More visitors were expected, for Latimer observed with a smile, as he took the seat offered him by Ridley, "Set another for Bilney, Nicholas, or the poor man will place himself, like a beguiled grandame, topsy-turvy! Alack, he is even so clean distraught and wo-begone with his apostacy, as he calleth it

—(alack, alack, and how truly calleth it!)—that I love to make preparation for him as an I were sure to see him again—which sometimes I misdoubt, for he is liker to lay evil hands on himself than ever he was to escape the purple dragon of Westminster's blasting folds!"

"He rails on himself, indeed, until it is nigh past patience to listen to him, for why died he not rather to avoid offence than to expiate it?" said Ridley, in those resolute tones that quailed not from amidst the enveloping flames of the future pile at Oxford. "Not to him, indeed, would I say the word, which truly were to throw waters on a drowned man; but apostacy—vile apostacy it was—to recant and bear the faggot, as he did, before the multitude, at Paul's Cross."

"Alas, brother, how know we how ourselves might pass through that red ordeal—that fiery furnace of terror, heated by the Cardinal for Bilney?" said Cranmer, with a visible shudder; adding, after a moment's uneasy silence, "But where is our brother, and my too rash pupil, Raphael Roodspere? He should have been here long ago by his promise, if that be St. John's ringing out complins!"

"Thou art even as a clocking hen, brother Thomas, that hath hatched a brood of ducklings,

regarding that good youth! Fie, what a terror art thou in to see thy birds take water," said Latimer. "But, indeed, I was glad he was not with us at commons. It was at him, without doubt, the bull-headed black friar butted all the while from the reading-desk. Heard ye not how he railed, and said the devil had come among us worse now in the speeches of divers sophistical sermonisers who devote themselves to assaults on monkeries and friaries, well knowing them to be the main pillars, walls, buttresses, and I wot not all what supports besides, to the church founded on—sands."

"I heard the bawling rogue. They are doing what they can to draw the Cardinal's frowns upon him, but his own rashness much more," said Cranmer, with a deep sigh.

"Yet if what men say be true, that he is as nigh akin to the Cardinal in blood as he is alien to him in all other matters, they cannot place him in such jeopardy as they belike desire," observed Ridley.

"But is it true? Himself doth never so assert, but rather eschews all mention and allusion to any parentage between him and the Cardinal, ascribing the protection he receives merely to his grace's favourable opinion of his capacity, and desire to plenish his schools

with scholars of the new learning," replied Cranmer.

"It is certain Raphael was born at Lymington, in Somersetshire, where the Cardinal, being young, was so jolly a vicar that Sir Amias Paulet saw fit to lay him by the heels in the stocks," said Latimer. "And Stephen Gardiner, his grace's secretary, came thus far germane to the matter once with me as to aver that Raphael's mother was never married, but that yet he marvelled he should keep his parentage so hidden and dark, seeing that he himself was not ashamed of his, being Bishop Woodville's bastard."

"But what special favour hath the Cardinal ever shown to Roodspere to mark a relationship so near and natural, though forbidden and uncanonical?" said Ridley. "You have oft told me, father Latimer, what an unkempt rustic he came among ye, with such rudiments of learning only acquired as a poor parish clerk could give a village schoolboy. His allowance has been as scanty as a yeoman's second son's at our starved St. Bee's in the north; and so far from exhibiting a special kindness and protection towards the young man, who so well deserves the best reward the Cardinal hath in gift, ye all remember how, when his grace

came to make his visitation in Cambridge, Raphael was removed, on some strange pretext, out of his sight and presence all the time of his abode among us."

"Why, it was strange, indeed! But they say the Cardinal cannot bear the sight or recollection of aught that reminds him of his poorer estate," said Latimer. "Yet did we not all as potently observe how afterwards Bishop Longland seemed to have no other business in Cambridge but to admit Roodspere to the priesthood, yet came by special commission from his patron and lord, the Cardinal?"

"How the truth may be in this matter is, belike, hard to say; but, certes, it is strange Raphael comes not hither now!" said Cranmer, with visible anxiety. "He has kept close chamber these two days, it is true; but he prayed me very earnestly to bring ye all together this eventide, that he might consult with us on a point of special difficulty and moment."

"Is it some scriptural doubt?" said Latimer, "But, nay, smile not, Master Ridley! I wot as well as thou, that though of the youngest among us, he hath the clearest lamp of learning and inward grace to guide his conclusions of us all; but his modesty equals his merit, and

he knows not in what estimation to hold his proper judgment."

"He prayed me not to question the wherefore until we met, and I forbore," said Cranmer. "Yet it troubles me to remember how strangely joy and sadness were mingled in his looks as he spoke—even as in a soldier's whose chief has chosen him on some glorious but perilous enterprise. My soul misgives me that this young David, whom I love as dearly as I might a carnal son, will be summoned the next among us to bear witness to God's truth before men!"

"He will not melt in the furnace as Bilney did!" said Ridley. "He, alone, hath dared openly, since the recantation, to confront the giant—to cast stones from the slings of the Gospel at the Goliath of Rome! and he is the first, methinks, since Wicliffe, that hath ever dared to tell the monks to their faces that men's works are of no avail—that the blood of our blessed Lord, shed on the holy rood, is a sufficient redemption of all mankind, needing no aid from them and their prayers and fastings, and heathen mummeries!"

"It is a doctrine that levels, as with a battering-ram, the foundations whereon the monks have built their houses of sin and superstition," said Latimer. "But, indeed, if even the good

works and macerations of men could win that grace to souls which is of God's free gift only, the pampered carles have none to market their doting chapmen withal! They are rich in *grease*, not in *grace*!"

"Speak not so loudly, brother Hugh! Remember we are *vehementer suspecti!*" said Cranmer, looking timorously around, as if he thought the very walls could hear.

"Bokenham hath long lugs, but they will scarcely reach from St. John's hither," said Latimer, with a smile. "Methinks, Thomas, you do hold us all in with too tight a rein; but at least you should not let this young soldier press so far before us in the onset."

"I cannot bridle him as I would; his rash zeal obeys not captaincy," replied Cranmer. "But against the monks, he will have it, there is the less danger to appear in arms, that Wolsey himself encourages attacks on the monastic orders. I do hear how their laziness, pride, ignorance, and wallowing luxury are favourite topics of railing in the Cardinal's court. He cherishes Erasmus, who, ye well wot, makes them the eternal food of his laughter, that sears like the edge of lightning! He hath done what no King of England ever yet has dared to do against them since Edgar and

Dunstan made them lords of half the land, cutting large slivers from their inheritance of fools' endowments, and traducing the same to his own purposes."

"The Cardinal only nets the small fry—he is one of the great fishes himself—he is Abbot of St. Alban's," said Latimer.

"Truly! and I can in nowise shake this evil boding from my spirits," said Cranmer. "My nose bled thrice to-day, and the raven they call the Black Abbess alighted on the ivy of my lattice this morn, and would not be frighted away!"

The influence of superstition, even on the most powerful minds of the age, was as yet but little diminished by the spread of spiritual sunlight. The disastrous aspect of the times made men of the new persuasion more peculiarly open to sinister auguries; and the person associated with Cranmer's doleful anticipations was so greatly beloved and honoured among his co-religionists, that it is no wonder the prospect of danger to him shadowed their minds with gloom.

The Brethren continued to dwell for some time with anxiety on the topic of Raphael Roodspere's prolonged absence, until at last the feeling on this score arose to a degree of

apprehension, and Ridley announced his determination to go and seek him in his cell. He was about to depart, with the general assent, on this mission, when footsteps were heard, and the subject of anxiety made his appearance, with another also well known to all present.

CHAPTER II.

RAPHAEL ROODSPERE.

As bright as does the morning star appear,
Out of the East, with flaming locks bedight,
To tell the dawning day is drawing near,
And to the world does bring long wished-for light.
SPENSER.

THE person so anxiously expected, who bore the name of Raphael Roodspere, was a young man about five or six and twenty, tall in stature, and remarkably well formed, with a countenance so finely carved in all its lineaments, that but for its cast of studious and even melancholy gravity and paleness, it might have been thought he had received his name from a popular identification of his characteristics with those of his namesake, the gracious archangel that guided Tobias. This fanciful resemblance was increased by the purity and almost womanly fairness of his complexion, which only occasionally flushing with the colours of a glowing blood, still attested it was rather

strength of moral principle, and habits of self control, than any lack of the fire and energy of youth which rendered him the fit disciple and companion of the grave and religious men with whom he habitually consorted. There was an expression of sweetness and tenderness mingled with the profound thoughtfulness in the gaze of his deep blue eyes that added to the effect of his spiritual and noble physiognomy, in enforcing the similitude indicated above, on the imagination. But it was greatly heightened by the circumstance that his long golden-brown locks were marked with a kind of glory by the ring of an almost effaced tonsure of priesthood, which he seemed to have received in very early youth, and to have taken little pains to preserve. His dress was that of an inferior student, or sizer, of the University, and was not remarkable in that age among the class to which he apparently belonged for being much worn, and, indeed, guilty of the premeditated poverty of patches in several places.

The person by whom he was accompanied, or rather whom he led in, was almost the reverse in external attributes. He was a middle-aged man, of a small figure, and of a dark complexion, whose general appearance,

far from inspiring a confidence akin to affection, at a glance, struck the fear an ancient demoniac might have roused in the beholder, suddenly starting from a place of tombs. And in truth, a frenzy of religious despair possessed the soul of the unhappy Bilney, which might well be likened to the sufferings inflicted by the devils of the raging Gergesenes. His look was so singularly wild, ghastly, and pallid; so glaring at the eyes with the unsettled flame of his distracted thoughts, that his physiognomy bore some fearful resemblance to a burning limekiln at nightfall. He entered without any salutation but a bewildered stare round the assembled group, who all proffered him their hands with the zeal of fear as well as of affection. But he shook his head, and muttering hoarsely, "In God's name, no, lest I taint ye with worse than the black sweat of the sickness!" he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed in a dry paroxysm of anguish. All present then remarked that both Bilney and his young disciple's clothes were covered with mud, and torn with briars. "See ye, brother?" whispered Latimer to Cranmer. "Now as ever, while we were talking, Roodspere was doing. Doubtless he hath been

busied saving Bilney from the demon of his own despair!"

"You tainted us somewhat of old, indeed, brother," began Cranmer, compassionately, but as cheerily as he could assume in tone, "with your love and search for the truth, your deep learning, and other your inestimable virtuous qualities; but why should you now fear—" Then, perceiving how his well-meant consolation would run aground, he paused.

"Nay, nay, I do not fear to make any of ye the sharers of mine iniquity. There was but one Judas among the disciples of our Lord!" groaned Bilney, taking the proffered hand with a ghastly smile, but letting it fall from his despairing and lifeless pressure.

"In no wise dost thou resemble the red-haired Iscariot, Bilney," said Latimer, smoothening his friend's black locks from his forehead, where they hung in damp clusters, like oozy weeds.

"Why, it is true, I have not sold my Saviour for thirty pieces of silver, but for as many days of worthless life, I have, I have!" gasped Bilney. "Why will ye not then let me imitate the rest of mine example, and do as Judas did? There are quivering aspens enow in the marshes yonder that have never forgotten how he hung

his accursed weight among their boughs. I had no purpose to blast another tree."

"Nay, father, there is holier example for you to follow, even blessed Peter's, whom you more resemble, that turned away his face and wept—no saltier tears than these, for, God be praised, he weeps!" said Roodspere, in tones of deep, winning melody, like the flute-notes of an organ in their mellow sobriety and rich religious harmony. "Yet Peter lived to build the Church of Christ as you, father, shall live to rebuild it from its ruins!"

"But Christ never cast Peter into despair with the certainty of his rejection—never permitted the demon to lead him into a marshy place, among thorns and briars, to be his own executioner that dared not die for His sake, by others' hands!" ejaculated Bilney.

"But did not God send an angel to save you, an archangel, brother, even Raphael himself?" said Latimer, ascertaining with profound grief, in spite of the jocular tone of his reply, that his interpretation of the stained and rent appearance of the self-condemned teacher and his saving disciple was correct.

"Let us not reason with this mood—as wel with the storm-vexed sea," said Roodspere, in a low tone. "But remember, brethren, I

leave ye the care of this our common father in spirituality as the only valuable legacy I have to make—for I am come to bid ye all farewell. I am summoned to London—to the presence of the Cardinal!"

A dead silence of surprise and fear followed this announcement, though it was made with little apparent sign of emotion, and the brethren gazed at one another in mute dismay for some moments. Cranmer was the first who spoke. "The raven lied not!" he exclaimed. "Said I not that some heavy evil hung over us? And the heaviest that can befal is come. But thou shalt not go alone to destruction, my son! I will with thee, and share thy doom, whatever it be."

"Nay, sir, I must go, and go alone," replied Roodspere. "So runs the order which I must obey; nor would I for a kingdom's ransom that any of you should share a risk I can meet alone. But I deem not I am summoned to encounter danger, though wherefore else I cannot well divine. Certain only it is, I am commanded to render myself to the Lord Legate's presence within three days of notice given, whereof a day and a night have elapsed."

"For what but evil can any of us be summoned to Wolsey's presence, son?" said

Cranmer. "God pardon thee, Bilney; but much I fear thy terrors have betrayed us also, thy fellow labourers in the vineyard, to the murtherous usurpers thereof."

"God pardon thee thine uncharity, Thomas; but of this betrayal, by Him I have alone betrayed, I am innocent!" exclaimed Bilney, whose attention had been gradually awakened from a kind of stupor into which he sunk after his paroxysm of mental anguish.

"Most wholly do I believe in thine innocence, dear father," said Roodspere, tenderly. "Neither was my summons brought me by a stern apparitor, but comes in a civilly-worded letter from the Cardinal's new secretary, Master Cromwel. Ye shall hear and judge."

He produced an epistle as he spoke, duly sealed in lead, with the Cardinal Legate's arms and hat surmounting the emblematic keys. Cranmer took it with that hand quivering which was afterwards held firmly as marble in the flames, and read it aloud :—

"Master Raphael Roodspere, young but most learned doctor *in divinis literis:* my hearty commendations prefaced to your ripe capacity and scholarship, these are to require you, in my Lord Legate his Grace's name, to render yourself to his presence, *apud West-*

monasterium, with no more delay than a bridegroom would willingly put between his wedding and his bedding; or, at the utmost, three days and as many nights. Herein fail not! I say not on peril of your body, but of the loss of as much good fortune and fair hope of advancement as other men lose long lives in sighing for in vain. In this assurance ye may place entire faith, taking no misgiving, and uttering none, in any matter connected with the raving monks of your country, whose bad Latin my lord nothing heeds. In token whereof, this same messenger bears them peremptory precept to grant you, on your immediate request, the grace of a doctor's degree, so long overdue, though denied by their malice and envy to your merits. Written in haste, but in all good will, by the hand of your assured friend and joyful welcomer,

"THOMAS CROMWEL,
"Secretary of Laws to the Cardinal's
"Grace of York."

"What are we to deem of this? It is sweet to the ear, but so is the fowler's lure," said Cranmer.

"Truly, I rather fear some temptation than violent assault of the fiend, for look what follows in a *postscriptum* most earnestly starred,

and seeming as if penned after other eyes had perused the main charge," replied Roodspere.

Cranmer lifted the paper again, and observed that in his agitation he had omitted a remarkable addition to the above rescript.

"*** *Specialiter nota!* Master scholar, on your arrival make repair to York Place and demand, firstly and privily, to *see me,* who, for certain causes of weight and moment, importing your welfare most nearly, but only to be delivered tonguewise, would have private speech with you ere you enter the Lord Cardinal's presence. Ask for me of one Master Cavendish, a civil-spoken gentleman, usher to his grace. From the same Thomas, with the like additions.

"What may this mean, of all mercies?" said Cranmer.

"I know not; unless the winds of God have borne the good seed into seemingly inaccessible places. And, indeed, from what the black cattle bellow here against him, Master Cromwel may be in something a favourer of the Gospel," said Roodspere; but the blood rose in his face at the same time as if he were conscious of another and less satisfactory explanation.

"Nay, Raphael, they do but hate him because it is he who hath had mainly to do

with the execution of the bulls suppressing the cells and monasteries of whose ruins are built proud Cardinal College, at Oxford, and Ipswich school," said Cranmer.

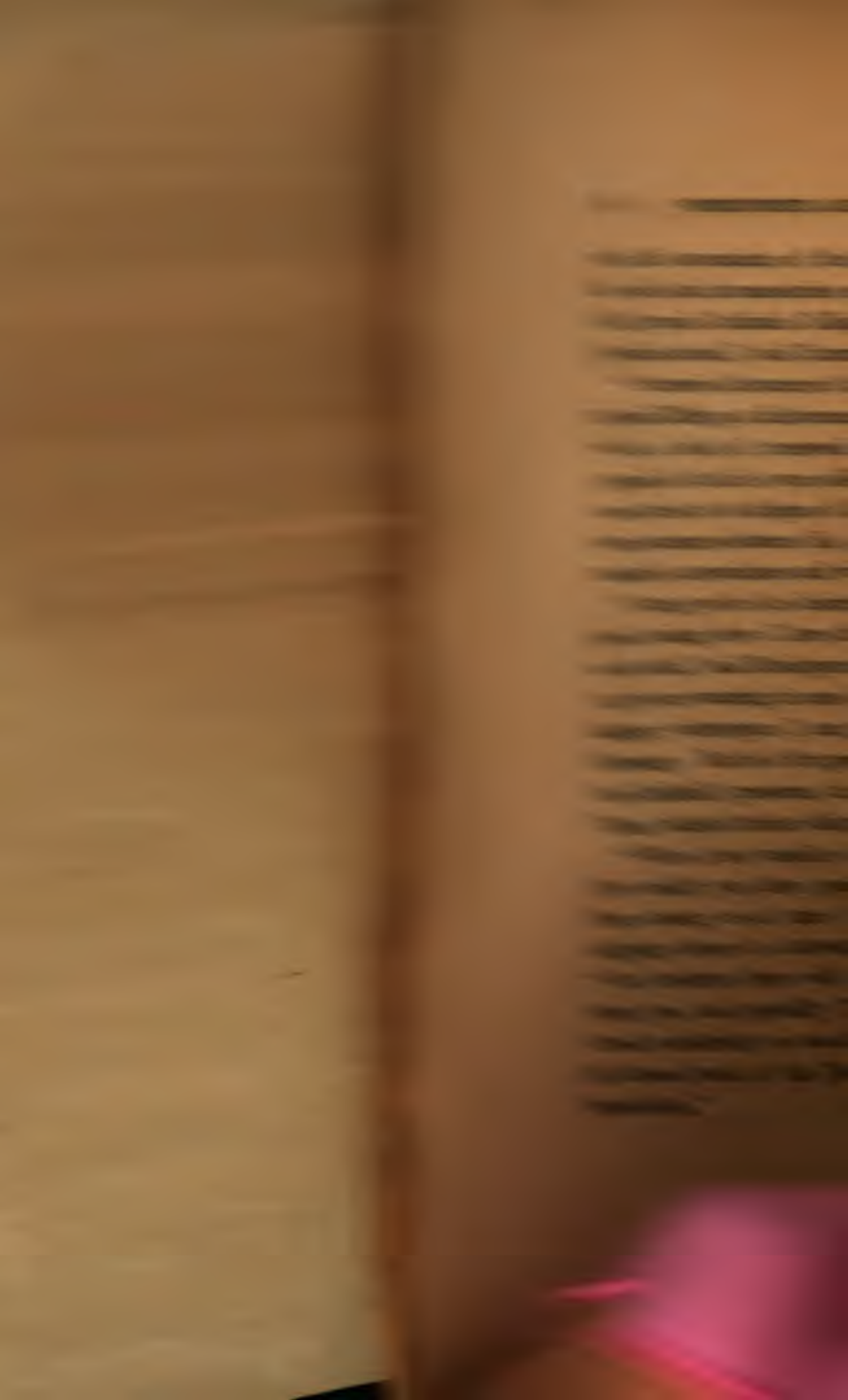
"Cromwel a favourer of the gospel!" interrupted Bilney, at this moment, raising his head with a look of renewed wildness. "His gospel is but his own self-interest, and none need trust to be holpen of him who do not in some manner advance his, or his Anti-Christ master's, convenience and will!"

"It may yet be he desires to do me some good, seeing how I love the monks as little as he doth," said Roodspere. "At all events, to give me warning in case I am sought to my danger; whereupon I can pass the seas into Germany. But be it for good or ill I must to the Cardinal's presence, in his palace of York Place, without further delay."

"Were it not wiselier done, remembering how rashly you have spoken out, to pass from among us at once to Hull, and take shipping thence to Antwerp?" said Cranmer. "Our brethren there will most joyfully welcome you, and specially Tindal, who needs Greek scholarship so much to assist him in his blessed work of the Novum Testamentum translation."

"No, father, my work is set for me in England, and I have taken earnest-penny of the Lord in the joy and tranquillity my soul has attained in the thought that, at a distance from among ye, whatever I do may be done without fear of harming others whose safety should be, and is, dearer to me than mine own," said Roodspere, enthusiasm kindling like light all over his fine face. "Yet, certes, favour seems rather meant me, for hardly had I finished perusal of the secretary's missive, ere Doctor Bokenham steps into my chamber—he that was hottest to deny it me—to say that the Cardinal having been pleased to order a grace of doctor to be conferred on me, a convocation would be held to-morrow for the purpose."

"Mayhap then his grace holds that his purpose in sending Master Roodspere among us, as his chosen scholar, to acquire the new learning, is come to a ripeness, and that this goodly young tree of knowledge, which already overbranches the elder growth of the forest, may be transferred to his unfurnished closures at Ipswich and Oxford, and bear fruitage to the planter's honour there," said Latimer, with an effusion of the constitutional cheerfulness he



"No, father [illegible]
England, and [illegible]
the Lord in the [illegible]
has attained in the [illegible]
from among [illegible]
without fear of [illegible]
should be, and is [illegible]
said Roodspere [illegible]
all over his [illegible]
seems rather [illegible]
finished [illegible]
Doctor Bokenham [illegible]
that was [illegible]
Cardinal [illegible]
of doctor [illegible]
cation would [illegible]
purpose."

"Mayhap [illegible]
purpose in [illegible]
us, as his [illegible]
learning, [illegible]
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had now rallied that revived the spirits of the entire company.

"Truly, our brother, whom I am proud to call my master in such science as my rude north wit could yield harvest on, is well known to more than the envious monks here who deny him his due honours thereupon, to be a very bee of Hybla in the Greek, a rose of Sharon in the Hebrew!" said Ridley, with honest warmth.

"You give, indeed, like a brother, Nicholas, without stint or measure," said Roodspere, with an affectionate but somewhat melancholy smile.

"But what if thou art summoned as Bilney was, to be examined on points of belief, or to be set to use thy rare gifts of eloquence, and skill in the dialectic, against us?" said Cranmer, uneasily.

"Greek and Hebrew, if the Cardinal require me to teach, or whatever little knowledge I possess, I will gladly obey him therein—for all the paths of light lead to the sun!" said Roodspere, with a sublime upward glance. "But if he would have me teach what in my soul I hold to be doctrines of Anti-Christ, I will tell him fearlessly, my conscience will not suffer it, and abide patiently what follows."

"Nay, my son, there is no need of such rash

candour," said Cranmer, tremulously laying his hand on the young man's arm. "Cleave thou to the rock of the help of God, and commit the end of all things to Him! But if God should call you so as that you may use the wisdom of the world to His honour, even as far as you may perceive the glory of God to come thereof, refuse not your own advancement!"

The ingenuous countenance of Roodspere showed some shadow of displeasure, but more of sorrow, as this temporizing counsel fell from lips so honoured. But it excited the wrath of Bilney. His eyes shone up with a fearful light, his lips frothed, and his features became convulsed with agitation.

"Ha, Thomas, false Thomas!" he exclaimed, "wouldst thou set the undying worm in his soul also? Wouldst thou make him even as thyself art—a river running into the sea, that is neither fresh nor salt!"

"But, brother Bilney, thou knowest there are necessary outward compliances which—" began Cranmer, but the frenzied zealot again interrupted him.

"Necessary outward compliances, a burning of incense before the altars of the false gods!" he shouted. "Nay, if thou sheddest but one

seed of frankincense into the flames, as well kneel down and worship Jupiter and Baal at once!"

"Behold then how freely thou sendest him to the doom thyself didst fear to meet, didst shun by the vile apostacy whose badge is upon thine arm!" exclaimed Cranmer, carried away by his affection and fears for his young disciple, and pointing to the painting of a faggot which those who recanted were forced ever after to carry on their gownsleeves. He repented almost as he spoke the words, and broke off in entreaties to Bilney to forgive the rash expression he had used.

But the word *apostacy*, though often applied by Bilney to his own conduct, struck him, from the lips of another, with the effect of a heavy physical blow. He gave a convulsive start and leaped on his feet, turned lividly pale, and muttering some incoherent, gurgling sounds, essayed staggeringly to grope his way to the door.

"I have deserved this punishment, O Lord God! yea, and a thousandfold worse. Let me remove my reproach from among them, for I am as a rotten sheep among the sound!" they comprehended that he thus brokenly ejaculated, and then he turned with a kind of fury upon

Roodspere. "Ho, archangel!" he exclaimed, "why didst thou clutch me back when the dark gulf had so nigh swallowed me, when the devil's pools in yonder marsh had nigh sucked me down; when the ravens had sharpened their beaks to make a banquet of mine eyes? Thou hast cheated them and the field, but not for long!"

"Tarry, master, dearest master, for as such I have ever owned you and will—" said Cranmer, rising in great alarm. "Stay him, Raphael, and let me crave for pardon on my knees."

"Good father, leave us not thus — tarry awhile—but a moment! Didst thou not promise me to be patient henceforth, and bear the faggot in humble imitation of Him who bore the cross?" said Roodspere, interposing between the desperate theologian and the door. "Ah, thou wert wont to call me thy truest disciple, and now, when I need my master's aid and counsel most, will he desert me?"

"Oh, but *apostate!*" ejaculated Bilney, scarcely heeding what was said, and yet pausing. "But what of one man's voice? It is written everywhere!—on the walls of the churches, on the green bosom of the earth, on the sunniest skies of heaven! Anon, and I

shall read it in a fiery rune on the black pavements of hell! Let me depart whither the voice calls me—into the silence of darkness!"

"Now only, but most vehemently, deniest thou Christ, refusing pardon to thy brother!" said Roodspere, perceiving that the most energetic expressions were necessary to arrest the maddening thoughts of Bilney.

"Brother Bilney, by our old brotherhood, I beseech thee, forgive me!" said Cranmer. "Lo, at thy command I yield my son, the son of my soul, to destruction! Scarcely have my presence and counsels saved him; and if he goes alone to London, he goes to martyrdom! Yet speak the word, and go alone he shall!"

"Nay, for I will arise and gird my loins and go with him! *I* have taught him his faith—*he* shall teach me how to die constantly for it!" said Bilney, changing to another mood of delirium, his features elate and shining with triumph. "Son, are you ready, for, lo, I am!"

"It were his certain ruin! Why thirst ye for the blood of the youth?" said Cranmer, weeping with mingled grief and anger. "But if thou goest, Bilney, so will I! Madness shall not alone be his counsellor!"

"Nay, fathers, learn then wherefore I fear not that any personal ill is meant me—wherefore

your presences and aid were likelier to do me harm than good!" said Roodspere, his brows mantling with a deep blush, and an inexpressible sadness shadowing his whole expression. "Wolsey's blood flows in my veins!—and this is my unhappy mother's that burns in my forehead to avow it! God knows, I make no boast of the unlawful relationship that is between us; and fain would I have forgotten it as wholly as it hath long seemed himself had. But when I heard of Bilney's extreme danger, and bethought me of the great promises of favour and kindness made to me of yore by the Cardinal, I foolishly imagined my solicitation in his behalf might do him service. I ventured to remind his grace of those unsatisfied assurances, craving the transference of what benevolence they engaged to me, to the redemption of our persecuted father. I fear me my entreaties did but little service where I desired most, but the knowledge on what grounds I hazarded them at all, should satisfy ye the Cardinal cannot mean me any bodily hurt!"

There was a silence of very great embarrassment among the brethren for several moments —not unmingled perhaps with some feeling of alarm. Whatever opinions were formed, or

rumours were rife, concerning the connexion between the young scholar of Jesus and his mighty patron, the confirmation now given very naturally affected persons, who had so much reason to dread the Legate's observation, with vague sentiments of apprehension. It neded no great sagacity to discern the nature of the emotion which appeared in strong colouring on their countenances; and Roodspere was possessed of the intuitive divination that warmly sympathetic natures exercise even in their own despite, and to their own suffering and sorrow.

"Nay," he continued, with vehemence. "Nay, father Latimer!—dear brethren, all!—ye cannot deem that I would betray ye, for any love or for any fear! But if I had so Judas a will, how might I, without giving myself up to judgment at the same time, who, by all witnessing, have transcended far the limits whereto the most part of us have confined our plaints and investigations? If this fear might not be my restraint, so little cause have I to love the Cardinal, *that* surely shall never draw me on to any treason against those whom I hold, and have ever held, to be my true father and brethren only, in the communion of Christ!"

"Not love the Cardinal, being, as you avow, your natural sire — so loving and tenderly affectioned as we have all ever known you, Raphael?" murmured Cranmer.

"If I owe him existence, it was at the price of a mother's dishonour!—of years of disgrace and contumely to myself! I owe him only besides a reluctant and unkindly recognition, at best, of claims which even the wolf and raven admit to their young!" replied Roodspere. "But hear my story, and then ye may better judge what natural allegiance I owe."

CHAPTER III.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Behold! the hour is at hand.
MATT. xxvi.

"Ye all know," continued Roodspere, after a brief but emphatic hesitation, "that ere the Cardinal rose to his now glorious heights, he was for a period incumbent of a poor benefice in the west—Lymington, in Somersetshire—where I was born. My mother was a young girl of the village, daughter to the chief falconer of Sir Amias Paulet, of Hinton St. George, an ancient knight of great lineage, renowned for his doings in the late wars, and of unmatched sway and possessions in those parts. My grandfather was a man of sternly upright and religious demeanour; something, I have since thought, imbued with the opinions which Wicliffe diffused of old among us, and Martin Luther has in our days broached anew, chiefly in what regards the vicious living and evil example of the clergy. On these points

Sir Amias Paulet himself was an outspoken and most bitter railer, not only among his own vassals and servants, but also among their most powerful friends and adherents in the Parliaments wherein he served. I have never heard but that my mother was virtuously and soberly bred by the good man, her sire, who very early was left her only parent. Solitarily and somewhat sadly, belike, for he inhabited so lonely a lodge in Hinton Park, that it might have been thought sin could not have found the way hither, through tangled copse and shadowy forest glade, to work his evil will! Yet so it chanced. Lymington was our parish church, and it behoved my mother to wend on her harmless devotions there what time she was in the earliest bloom and innocence of womanhood, and Wolsey first became the vicar. Certes, it is no great marvel, being already famous in his University for his great wit and subtlety—handsome, young, of an ensnaring carriage and masterful genius, furnished with all such opportunities and influence as his station and office could bestow, that he won and abused the love and confidence of a simple village girl, whose beauty and ignorance offered her as defencelessly alluring to his machinations as a hedgeside rose to the way-

farer's rifling greed! I do remember me how, in my earliest years, I was stigmatised and outcast among the children of the village by the name of the 'priest's bastard'—only thereby had I reason to know that Wolsey was my father, during all the years of my childhood. I was the orphan of a living sire, contemned and forsaken, an unwelcome intruder into a home whither I brought shame, sorrow, and contention for a portion and an inheritance. Doubtless, Wolsey feared the scandal of my parentage might bar his hopes of advancement in the grave and decorous times of our late prince, King Henry VII.; and he ever publicly, and with vehement protestations, denied it. And besides—for let us be just even to the unjust—he had some cause to be exasperated with what chanced to him on mine and my mother's account. Sir Amias Paulet, waxing wrath, on my birth, with the discovery of his vassal's seduction and shame, by threats and suasions forced her to confess with whom lay the offence, and caused the unworthy vicar to be set in the stocks, in the midst of his own hooting parishioners, during such space as he deemed convenient to make his disgrace and its cause publicly manifest. Ye may well conclude how little the pride and vain-glory of him who now

scarce stomachs the equalling of great princes and nobles, could endure this merited ignominy and reproof, which also encouraged the rude and rustical people in those parts to refuse him all honour in respect of his calling and office among them. In especial, my grandfather, being of a resolved and stern temper, and secretly fraught with contempt and bitterness against the whole system and function of the clergy in those days, so unceasingly and relentlessly wreaked his just indignation against him for his daughter's shame, under counsel and protection of Sir Amias, that Wolsey quitted that country shortly after I was born—and even England itself, in the train of a Cheshire knight who was treasurer of Calais, until such time as chance and his better fortune recalled him hither to play so great a part as all men's eyes do now behold him triumphing in—being yet but on his way to an eminence of earthly glory, which in their fond opinion hath but the skies above it!—If so, how far!"

"Sir Amias must needs have repented him of that rough jest, during the seven years he abode in sanctuary, for dread of the Cardinal's vengeance," said Cranmer; "and methinks it was an unseemly justice, such as wise lords take only on their most lowly and rustical vas-

sals, to do upon one in holy orders and a beneficed clergyman."

"But we need scarcely marvel the Cardinal thenceforth took little pleasure in the recollection of his village cure," said Ridley. "But did he so altogether forget that nature made laws before canonists, as, for years, to take no manner of note of your existence, Raphael?"

"It was even so," replied the young man, with emotion. "But that old Adam Roodspere, my grandsire, in so far forgave his daughter that he cherished her and her unlawful offspring in his house, I know not what should have become of us. We must have gone forth, a perishing Hagar and Ishmael, into the wilderness of the world—no hand held out to save, no dark-green watergourd lifted up by angels to our parched lips! He that was called my father abandoned his cure and his offspring as alike hateful and despicable. And yet he must have felt, or feigned, some interest in my welfare, for, as I learned later, himself gave me the name of Raphael, and seemed to forgive my mother her affrighted confession of his delinquency, promising her that some day he would return and do great things both for her and her son.

It was therefore, that she obstinately clung to calling me by the archangel's name, against my grandfather's and Sir Amias's will, who would have called me Job, signifying sorrow and trouble! But Wolsey had already privily christened me, wherefore they could not change my designation. Yet Raphael signifies Physic of God—and a bitter physic I may yet prove to some!

"And thus was I bred in my grandfather's house, and the years of my childhood were full of griefs and mortification — chiefly on the score of my unhallowed parentage. My grandfather was a virtuous, but scarcely a kind man; superior in mind and demeanour to other agrestic and homebred men, but harsh in his manners—relentless alike in his loves and in his hates! I had no cause to expect that he should look on me with great favour, whose existence was his sorest calamity and reproach; and as he continued to detest the very name of the destroyer of his own and his daughter's peace, it was no marvel that he treated me with some severity and rigour in my childhood. He would oft reproach me with my sacrilegious birth, never speaking of Vicar Wolsey but with contumely and upbraiding—whereat my mother, being a very woman, though of a meek

and broken-hearted gentleness for the most part, would take his side with woful tears and complaints, saying that they who forced her to betray him, and so grievously dishonoured and shamed him, were the sole causes of his seeming cruelty and desertion. Yet at last even her fond and clinging tenderness could no longer deny or palliate, save with a lamenting silence, and tears which she dared not betray by wiping them away, that Vicar Wolsey had indeed abandoned his hapless victim and her child most utterly to the care of Him who feeds the raven on the barren mountain tops. And methinks it was no reparation of his violated vows, in the sight of Heaven, that he thus maintained the semblance of innocence in the sight of men! But it might be that he became speedily too much absorbed in the glories and perplexities of his rising power—in nobler and statelier paramours—to remember the simple woman he had betrayed, the paltry village whose peace he had troubled so profitlessly. The world had become his theatre, and was scarcely wide enough for the swelling pageantry of the part he would enact. From these bickerings, from the childish insults of my playfellows, from our lord, Sir Amias's, own scornful remem-

brancing, when by chance he espied me out, I learned too early the tale of guilt and disgrace which was my history. Something of evil—of sacrilege—seemed at the very fountain of my existence. I felt myself to be a thing profane; I knew not why. I grew to dislike all society of my fellows, to shun the village green and its sports, to hide myself like a fearful reptile whenever I discerned the stately person and long white beard of Sir Amias Paulet approaching the lodge we inhabited in his chase. New sources of trouble and contention arose. Nature was strong in me, being son of so learned a clerk, or else my mother infused the notion into me from so early a period that my memory cannot retrace the springtide of feelings that grew with my growth. But from my earliest years I disliked my grandfather's occupation, and by no teaching could acquire skill in it; while I had ever a desire after book-knowledge, and an anxious spirit of research in religious matters. This latter liking, I doubt not, was taken from my grandfather, who was himself singularly thoughtful and studious in spiritual dealings. Yet he took what pains he could to conceal his ideas on such subjects, and in especial the source whence he derived them,

in the English Bible of Wicliffe, over which he pondered in secrecy, and which I have reason to think his lord had given him, and also taught him to read. He looked upon me with a strange jealousy and distrust, as if I were some spy and delator to betray him. Also, he opposed my yearnings after scholarship, as if it betrayed my relationship to the profane clerk who had so abused his power over the mind of a simple country girl. On the other hand, my mother, by all the means she dared, encouraged my wishes. But it was not possible for her to win his consent to release me from the tasks of the forest and warren. Only, at rare intervals, she contrived that I should have time afforded me to frequent the village school, kept by Wolsey's starved curate, Clerk Ibbetson; so that when I came first to Cambridge, red and rusty from the plough, it is no reproach to my first teacher that I had almost my accidence to learn in the Latin, and all branches of the unprofitable sciences which I also then esteemed true wisdom!

"Thus years passed away; and at last, even to our remote village, came tidings of Wolsey's rise, who, indeed, ascended like an eagle in full soar, to the highest crags, without halt or

pause! For a long while my mother could not well believe the wild clerk, her once lover, had become the high and mighty prince and cardinal, on whose nod kings and nobles waited! But she grew at last to credit the rumour, and doubtless to cherish a mother's ambitious hopes in her secret heart. Contrariwise, my grandfather grew as it were hourly into deeper animosity against him. There came a sort of wandering men not unfrequently among us, who, I have since not doubted, were of the persecuted religionists that then began to labour anew in the choked vineyard of the Lord. Illiterate but firm-minded and heroical men, full of exalted hopes and purposes, and all smarting under the grievous tyranny of those who hated and feared the coming light, they were! From these wanderers Adam Roodspere could hear only what added to his dislike and dread of Wolsey; and I also listened, with my heart in flames, to their tidings! The word *father* had to me no significance; but these men stood before my young eyes, the living personations of great thoughts and heroical courage—apostles of the persecuted truth! Their tales and sufferings more than balanced all the effect of my mother's womanish fantasies and still

lingering love for her betrayer—so that when at length my grandfather's severity, and dislike against the evidence of his daughter's shame, was kindled to fury by the vengeance inflicted on his lord, and she would have had me flee to Wolsey for protection and advancement, I would not comply with her promptings.

"In sooth, so long as my grandfather lived, I lent no willing attention to my mother's suggestions—and resentment was kept alive in his heart by the unrelenting persecution his master, Sir Amias Paulet, sustained. Under other pretexts, but doubtless to revenge the great insult suffered at his hands, Wolsey kept him in fear and jeopardy of his life and goods during many years, insomuch that he dared not live among us, but resided, a panicstricken fugitive, in the sanctuary town of Westminster. This Christian prelate had not forgotten his hatred, but he had forgotten his love! No tidings ever reached us from him; and even my mother's heart grew faint at last with hope deferred. Meanwhile Sir Amias's estates fell into the hands of roguish stewards—were fined and forfeited in all imaginable mulcts—so that his fortunes sunk into ruin and decay. My grandfather's office became useless and unfeed

—himself fell into a despair and dotage—and but for my mother's toil and mine, he must have starved. We still inhabited our lodge—my mother spun flax night and day, and I hired myself, as a shepherd's boy, to a neighbouring farmer. But I was a mere lad, altogether unskilled in the tasks to which I offered myself; my birth stirred prejudice and ill-will against me, for even as a parish priest, Wolsey had been too haughty and masterful not to leave angry recollections behind him. I reaped his harvest! But I persevered in my exertions—relinquished altogether my scanty but much-loved books, rather than adopt the resource my mother pointed out—so odious and fearful had my sire's personage become to me! I felt, too, that to leave my grandfather—above all, on such an errand—would have broken his aged heart—for he loved me at last!—Thank God, he loved me well before he died!

"But die he did; and to bury him decently exhausted the slender remnant of our inheritance. Sir Amias Paulet, wroth with his long sufferings, had only forborne us for my grandfather's sake, and now turned us out of his lodge, to perish under the open skies, or share the fox's den. Nevertheless, Clerk

Ibbetson took pity on us, and sheltered us in an outhouse belonging to his parsonage. He could not do more, dreading scandal; he had a peevish housekeeper, and my mother's story, he perchance deemed, rendered caution more necessary regarding her than others. He was miserably poor, raising his subsistence by his own hand in his glebe. Thus, though we had a roof over head, we had still no means of supplying the merest wants of humanity saving by labour—the labour of one alone, it soon became. My mother, though still young, was sickly, and worn out with years of pining hopelessness. Want of sufficient sustenance, and harbourage which scarcely excluded the change and anger of the elements—the toils she was obliged to share, or too willingly took upon herself, that she might yet procure me seasons of leisure to continue my studies, on which her own soul was also bent—speedily did the work of destruction upon her! I saw her fading daily before mine eyes—I heard her wailings and expostulations—and could not but deem, as she lamented her, that the Cardinal would have pity on her if he knew to what a pass she was reduced, even if for myself I would not ask his awmous! Clerk Ibbetson, who I knew to be a pious and well-disposed

man, also exhorted me to comply with my mother's earnest entreaties, and endeavour to obtain some aid for her from the Cardinal. I could not unmoved, see my mother perish thus slowly of want and misery! I consented at last to seek the Cardinal's presence, and set out on foot to beg my way thither, furnished with more loving remembrances and proofs of my identity, than unhappy Phaeton carried to the gorgeous presence of his sire, the Sun!

"How long I was upon the way, what sufferings of hunger and toil I surmounted in the hope to save my mother's dear existence, I will not be so tedious as to tell. Even when I reached London, barefoot and starving, I had still another journey to take. The Cardinal was at Hampton Court. Thither yet I bent my way—was beaten with blows from his princely halls because I refused to reveal to his menials my name or business, and was obliged, as it were, to waylay him when he rode forth, in all his glory, on a hunting party, with the ambassadors of the emperor, in his park. Doubtless I bore a great resemblance to my mother, in her young days, for though I was one of a great throng of suitors and petitioners at his gates, the Cardinal started the moment he observed me—grew pale and flushed by turns—

and beckoned me to the stirrup of his mule. He questioned me whence I came—and waxed yet more troubled when I said from Lymington, in Somersetshire! But when I added, weepingly, that my name was Roodspere, and that my mother was Alice, the only daughter of Adam the falconer—he nigh dropped from the saddle with a sudden faintness! Whereof making his plaint, though he laid the blame on the too hot sun, he alighted, and caused them to bear him into his palace again, ordering me also to follow him. What conjectures men formed, I know not; but, after a pause, I was led into the Cardinal's private presence; and hours elapsed, and still the beggar-boy was closeted with the mighty minister!

"Ye have all seen him, and know how princely and gracious he is of his carriage, where he will—what a gift of golden words he hath—what authority and persuasion in all he saith and doeth! But when so mighty a one clasped me in his embrace, and with sobs and flooding tears owned me for his blood—when he acknowledged his fault in having neglected me so long, and promised infinite reparations—when he praised my person and parts with his most lavish eloquence, and spoke with the tenderness and freshness of a young man's

love reviving in his breast, concerning my mother—no marvel I was moved, melted—altogether overcome! Oh, how I loved that new-found sire then! There was nothing he did not promise me—I only asked immediate succour for my mother! It was granted. I would have borne it to her myself, on the very wings of my love, but I was utterly spent in body—my feet torn and bleeding—I had scarcely strength left to tell my tale! And when such joy came to crown it, I was vanquished quite, and yielded to the Cardinal's command that I should abide with him and rest, while he despatched a faithful servant of his own to give the necessary relief to my mother, and revive her sinking powers with the wine of hope!

"Stephen Gardiner, then one of the Cardinal's chaplains, was chosen to this office. He departed, I have since learned, with secret instructions to make inquiries into the truth of all I had averred, and on other points upon which the Cardinal desired to satisfy himself. It is strange—it is marvellous—but the mighty mind of Wolsey is subject to the most monkish superstitions of our age! He is a firm believer in the false science of judicial astrology, and Gardiner was instructed to

obtain the most minute information concerning the time of my birth, and other data whereon to erect an astrological prediction of my fortunes. None of ye here will deem it is scandal if I say that Gardiner is a meddling, censorious, rancorous-spirited man, who places his chief satisfaction in harming others. He arrived in Hinton St. George only just in time to gather these superstitious grounds of calculation from my mother's dying lips—I am even left in doubt whether he comforted her dreary passage of mortal agony with the full tidings of my good speed! Clerk Ibbetson thinks not, whose office of confessor and administrator of the church's last rites, Gardiner usurped by my mother's death-bed. She died belike unknowing that the Cardinal still loved her—which for her would have taken the bitterness out of the very cup of death! Oh, I was to blame to trust any other with such good tidings, that might perchance have given my poor mother yet strength to resist the destroyer! Nevertheless for days, for weeks after my reception at Hampton Court, I lay powerless on my couch, unable to raise my limbs save when the Cardinal entered my chamber, to inquire tenderly after my health, and sometimes himself to hand me my cups of

reviving cardiacs and herbs. But yea, I had strength always to rise on my elbows, and receive that new-found father's benediction!

"Indeed, until Gardiner returned, I grew as it were hourly in the Cardinal's favour. I obtained from him what the most powerful suitors had failed to win—the pardon and release of Sir Amias Paulet, simply by enlarging on the long protection he had granted my grandsire. Of his own accord, the Cardinal resigned his benefice of Lymington, which he had continued to hold amidst all his archbishoprics and bishoprics, and abbacies unnumbered, to the good man who had schooled and befriended me in my adversity. Clerk Ibbetson was luckily collated to his vicarage before Gardiner's return, else methinks he would also have come under the cloud which then immediately shadowed me. I know not why Gardiner should desire to do me mischief; but it soon became manifest, even to my youth's simplicity, that mischief he had done me. That he represented my mother's family as a nest of heretics, and favourers of heresy—myself as one bred in their fallacies, and, young as I was, an earnest and vehement propagator of the same — I learned from the Cardinal's own amazed inquisition. Ib-

betson himself escaped not Gardiner's evil tongue, on the same score. And all this he affected to have gathered from my mother's dying confession, to himself! His proofs, beside, were only my grandsire's possession of Wicliffe's forbidden Bible, and which, indeed, after his death, became my own most earnest delight and study—until when he concealed it with something of madly jealous and fearful care! But of heresy or heretics, I knew scarcely then what the words meant—much less merited I to share their condemnation on any score of abstract opinion. Nevertheless, Gardiner was not content with that strange suggestion. He even endeavoured to throw doubts on my claims to the Cardinal's consideration—unhappy as they were—declaring that in my village I was held to be the unlawful issue of old Sir Amias Paulet himself, and of his keeper's daughter. The Cardinal lent no credit to this ribald invention, unless it might be to soothe the reproaches of his conscience by persuading himself that my mother had not proved faithful to her guilty love, and in some measure deserved her woful fate. Nor did his favour and loving kindness seem greatly to diminish towards me until he had consulted a certain

soothsayer on my horoscope, in whose predictions he placed extraordinary faith. A monk of the Charterhouse in London — one Friar Hopkins—drew the scheme of my nativity; and though I never learned what might be the deductions his vain science drew, from that hour I declined in the Cardinal's favour. My unlimited access to his presence was suddenly withdrawn; when I entered it I was received with a degree of coldness and embarrassment I could not understand, but felt in my heart's core! It seemed as if almost my sire dreaded some personal mischief from me—some attempt at assassination, or other desperate evil! But I was not left long to form conjectures. Under plea of immediately gratifying my eager thirst for knowledge, and specially my unguarded expressions of the infinite desire within me to acquire the original languages of Wicliffe's great book, which I heard railed upon in the Cardinal's court as a false and heretical translation, I was sent to Cambridge. It is more than six years ago; yet from that hour I have never been admitted to Wolsey's presence. When even he visited here, with Erasmus in his company, ye all remember how I was sent on a fool's errand, on a pilgrimage to Walsingham, merely to be thrust out of his sight!

What, then, if I owe to him the chance boon of life, and the scanty means which have hitherto maintained it?—I owe to you, brethren, its sweetest consolations—the spiritual life which is the only true and valuable existence of mankind—the aliment which has sustained my reason and intellect, the noblest parts of humanity!—But, lest you should still misdoubt of me, I will place myself wholly in your hands, confiding to your care this treatise of mine, wherein I have placed on record the reasons which do compel me to regard the whole offering of the Mass as a pagan idolatry, unacceptable to God!"

As we have previously observed, whatever might be the secret workings of opinion among them, the Cambridge doctors had as yet evinced but few symptoms of doctrinal revolt. Least of all on so momentous, and, in fact, all-concentrating a point as the one on which Roodspere now openly declared his separation.

"Raphael! my son, my pupil!—would you have us to believe that you share the woful error of Luther in regard of the Sacrament?" said Cranmer, turning very pale. All gazed with eager wonder and expectation at the youthful propounder of so startling an advance.

"Nay, father," replied Roodspere, with some embarrassment, "read only what poor arguments I can allege for mine opinion that in this even Luther himself—Luther hath opened the door of light, but its sudden radiance dazzles even his strong vision—and those who follow in his steps, being trained more gradually to explore it, may see farther in the blaze! Only in spirituality and in essence do I admit of a superhuman presence in the cup of the Sacrament! Will none of ye take my book and be judges of my reasons?"

There was a pause of dismayed silence among these founders of the Anglican Church, who were yet destined to place the doctrine thus timorously announced by the young apostle as the corner-stone in the great fabric of the Church they were to raise. It was in effect the denial of the Real Presence—the key of the arch of Protestantism!

And now, before any other dared to express acquiescence, Bilney had snatched the manuscript which Roodspere produced from the folds of his vest, with the ravenous eagerness of a starved man for food.

"Give it to me—to me! If thou hast found some steady rock whereon to stand amidst the

tumbling and raging surf, let me also plant my foot upon it!" he exclaimed.

"Nay, brother," said Cranmer, gently but firmly taking it from him, "it is for all our perusal and study; and together we will form our conclusions on the work. Meanwhile, I will be its treasurer. Roodspere's safety demands no less, if, indeed, it be not forfeited already; for is it not strange the Cardinal should send for you now again, dear son, after such long intervals of neglect?"

"My letters in Bilney's behalf may have brought me to his recollection; and Gardiner, who, for reasons of his own, is my enemy, is absent, I have heard, on a charge to Rome," replied Roodspere, cheerfully. "Howsoever, I have no alternative but obedience; and I shall go joyfully to either fate if my father Bilney here promises to abstain from any rash purposes of his own until he has thoroughly weighed and considered on what reasons I base my strength."

"I do promise, Raphael! God has given me a gleam of hope once more—I see that my example will deter, not lead thee on, to the betrayal of the truth!" said Bilney, in a calmer and more rational tone than he had as yet used. "Thou goest indeed to destruction—my soul

prophesies it! The dragon devours his own brood when he is wroth! But why should I defile the white flames of thy martyrdom with the rank blaze of an apostate's sacrifice? Go to thy glory; go to thy doom—alone! Bilney is not worthy to share either with thee!"

"Let us pray for him as for one who enters the den of lions, unarmed, saving by the word of truth," said Cranmer. "Promise me only, for *my* sake, my son!—that you will not wilfully rush upon destruction, by the open avowal of these your beliefs, or perilous conjectures, of the truth."

"I do. I will not. I have other projects, dear father! I deem that men need enlightening by other than the fitful blaze of the martyr's stake!" said Roodspere. "I would dedicate myself to the spread of the knowledge which is as sure precursor of true religion in men's hearts as the effulgence of light comes before the rising of the sun! But God's will be done, whatever it be! I am ready."

"Oremus! let us pray for him," said Cranmer, sinking on his knees—an act of devotion which was imitated by all present, and by none more zealously than by Bilney. Cranmer then gave utterance to the prayer which was in every heart on behalf of the young champion

whom they were now about to send forth from amid their ranks to the conflict. But he added an earnest supplication that God would endue the youth with prudence to avoid the snares of his enemies, and to shun wilfully tempting the rage of the adversary; but neither surrendering the truth by word or deed.

"It is well said," observed Latimer, rising after the ensuing brief and silent, but most ardent repetition of this prayer made internally by each of the brethren; "and now let us partake of the blessed elements together—whether simply as of the substances of the corn and vine, in remembrance of the Lord—as methinks Raphael would teach us is true doctrine—or as the flesh and blood of Him. *But, indeed, something my soul tells me that the day will come when we shall all be of one belief in this high matter, and it will become the very touchstone of assay between us and our adversaries!*"

No one offered objections to a proposal which allowed full latitude to the private opinions of all; and Latimer, as the oldest priest present, prepared the sacramental elements. The brethren broke the bread together, and passed the cup from lip to lip in silence. It was of pure gold, almost the only article of value possessed by the future Pri-

mate, at this period. And as it was raised in reverence by each kneeling recipient in succession over his forehead, and gleamed in the faint light, it might have seemed to a fanciful eye as if tongues of fire once more descended on the heads of a group of new apostles. It struck Latimer somewhat in this point of view, though he alluded to the circumstance with the touch of humour that often mingled with his most serious cogitations. "Brethren," he said, "it may well chance that we shall also be called upon to preach with tongues of fire to the people; for, certes, if we go on as we have begun, for all thy prudence, Thomas, we shall come to the stake, and compose blazing hieroglyphs which the dullest shall perforce read and understand!"

After this effusion the brethren arose, and all being anxious to change the sombre and dispiriting tone of the conversation, it passed into more everyday topics connected with the departure of Roodspere, which it is not necessary to repeat. The meeting only separated at midnight—to re-assemble at an early hour and escort Roodspere, with friendly zeal, some distance on his way out of Cambridge.

CHAPTER IV.

MARCHANT HUNNE.

> Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries
> Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,
> Aloud for justice, and rough chastisement.
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

THE parting of the Cambridge Reformers was affectionate and solemn, as that of brethren who bid one another farewell on the deck of some barque bound to remote and dangerous shores. Latimer and Cranmer bestowed an earnest benediction on the young traveller, and Ridley embraced him without daring to trust his tongue with any words of regret, feeling that firm utterance failed even his manly and stedfast heart. But Roodspere understood the silence. His own eyes were filled with tears, which yet he would not suffer to overflow. Bilney alone was absent, but Roodspere had the satisfaction to learn he had fallen into so deep a slumber that Ridley, in whose chamber he slept, thought it best not to disturb him.

Yet, again, before they parted, Roodspere reassured Cranmer's fatherly fears with promises that he would not wilfully incur danger by any uncalled-for avowal of his opinions. Regard for the safety of his loved friends and associates would alone suffice, he said, with affectionate sweetness, to induce him to be on his guard against any rash and unnecessary manifestation of his sentiments. On the whole, the brethren parted from their young fellow-labourer more cheerfully than might have been expected, heartened, in good measure, by his own calmly courageous demeanour. Then, gently urging the ill-conditioned steed forward, which was the only one his poverty enabled him to provide for the journey, after many a backward glance, Roodspere found himself alone in the world, and in the midst of one of the extensive marshy wastes that environed Cambridge at the period. But when the last flutter of his friends' academic robes vanished in the distance, he yielded to the over-mastering emotion so long suppressed, and wept with almost a womanish passion of tenderness and grief. Relieved by this paroxysm, he drew his hood over his face and pursued his way, immersed in sorrowful reverie, and heedless

utterly, of the few objects that occurred to break the monotony of the scene he traversed.

What of consolation could, indeed, mingle in the cogitations that oppressed the wayfarer's memory and heart? Whatever confidence he had affected to cheer his friends, Roodspere felt little or none in the existence of any parental feeling on the part of the Cardinal, who had so long treated him with neglect. The fruit of a casual amour, probably the mere indulgence of an animal passion, what reason had he to trust in the tenderness of a sire to whom his existence was a reproach and an evidence of the violation of vows deemed the most sacred in his church? No bonds of association or of habit united them, without which the mysterious link of blood itself seems to lack its mightiest power. Little even of the natural protection and kindness the brutes of the earth and sky extend to their offspring, had Wolsey bestowed upon his forgotten son! What claims could he then urge upon his forbearance if, as was probable, tidings of his heterodox leanings had reached the Cardinal's notice? And Roodspere was determined never to imitate the apostacy, and share the maddening remorse of Bilney.

Nevertheless, the young Cambridge doctor—

for the authorities had conferred the degree upon him, so long unjustly withheld, but which they dared not longer refuse to their potent Chancellor's behest—had no fanatic purposes to run amuck against the power of the prodigious system, whose overthrow was yet the necessary preliminary of the triumph of the principles he had embraced. Roodspere was fraught, indeed, with a faith and enthusiasm that needed only the trample of oppression to quicken into the vehement flame of a martyr's challenging audacity. But, hitherto, his convictions in favour of the new doctrines preserved a natural bias in the mind of a scholar; and to spread the enlightenment he believed he had received from the study of the Scriptures, in their uncorrupted simplicity, seemed to him the most useful and holy dedication he could assign himself. But a motive more powerful than even this sublime conviction and confidence in the illuminating diffusion of the long-darkened truth, exercised, almost unconsciously to Roodspere himself, a mighty influence in his resolves. By no effort of reason or resentment, could he shake off the disarming recollection that the chief of the system which would thus be lifted from its unstable foundations, stood to him in the sacred and exalted relation of the giver of

the life that circulated in his veins. Moreover, briefly as they had known each other, his extraordinary sire had established himself in an enduring influence over the heart and mind of his son which no circumstance of time or neglect had availed effectually to destroy. Not all his mother's wrongs and his own—the long unkindness exhibited towards him—the change in the entire action of his mental faculties and principles—could obliterate the dominion acquired by Wolsey in his subtle exercise of the magic which nature and circumstances bestowed upon his wily and yet commanding genius!

This potent sway over an affectionate and reverential spirit, like that of the young disciple of the Reformation, to common apprehension, would have had nothing singular in it. Wolsey possessed the fascination appertaining to glory and good fortune, in the most wonderful degree. All Europe rang with his fame; he held its balance in his hands; the councils of his country were swayed by his sole voice. Every lustre enormous wealth and magnificence could confer, surrounded him; the sceptre of genius was in his grasp; he filled the most august and venerable offices which mankind have agreed to exalt in awful re-

verence and esteem. On eyes so young and unaccustomed to the displays of earthly vanities, as the despised suppliant who first beheld them united all, in dazzling profusion, in the person of a father, it would have been no wonder if they had exercised an overwhelming effect. Still it was not so. From his earliest years, Roodspere was imbued with the solemn grandeur of thoughts which own no allegiance to the things of the world—the outward attributes and trappings of a fallen humanity! But, at the same time, he had a heart so sensitively moulded, so exquisitely alive to every tender and endearing emotion, that Wolsey still found a way to subjugate it with a yoke which remained unimpaired amidst all the oscillations and revolutions in the intellect of his son. His brief display of affection, yet so apparently impassioned and sincere, conciliated Roodspere's inmost soul, effaced the bitter memory of previous wrong, and in a manner enslaved all his faculties to the ascendancy of that mighty will whose dictates he yet hoped he might not be called upon openly to withstand.

But how might this dreaded contest of feeling and duty be shunned? For what purpose was he summoned to the Cardinal's presence? Were his delinquencies discovered? Wholly,

indeed, they could not be, since he had scarcely confided to his own bosom the full extent of the progress he had made in the new path! Bilney, himself, guessed not the extent to which his doctrines had germinated in that rich soil—how the mustard seed had become a tree! But from his earliest arrival in the University, Roodspere had been associated in what was then the obscure, and scarcely noticed party that now began to diffuse so much alarm. His ardent desire to acquire the New Learning, of which Cranmer was one of the most distinguished teachers, recommended him from the first to him. He became Cranmer's pupil—his beloved disciple—and was by him initiated in all the scholastic science then deemed the fitting preparation for the queen and crown of all, Theology. His eminent talents, his mild and unassuming manners, the shade of melancholy in his character even, soon made him an object of deep interest and hope with the congenial though more irresolute and learned master and his associates. The only circumstance against him was, that he was believed to be under the Cardinal's patronage. No nearer relationship, though surmised and rumoured, was for a long while credited, for he himself never alluded to any, and Wolsey's

conduct could not readily be conciliated with the supposition. During Roodspere's long abode in the University, notwithstanding the reputation he acquired, he received no marks of special notice, saving some few which rather indicated hostile than parental feelings. He was peremptorily inducted in the priesthood at an unusually early age, and before he could have formed any notion of his own fitness, in order, as Gardiner openly declared, that the Cardinal might relieve himself of the charge of his maintenance by conferring upon him a small prebend in one of his cathedrals. The due transmission of the narrow income thence derived, and the singular precaution which removed him from Cambridge during Wolsey's visit there, alone testified that this great patron preserved any further recollection of his existence.

This persevering neglect, or worse, disdain, might have had some influence in directing the current of Roodspere's mind, as the mortifications and sorrows besetting Cranmer's unlucky marriage doubtless had upon his career. But an intellect so bright and inwardly illumined, could not long remain confined within the circle of darkness environing the theological sciences of the age. The narrow bounds,

the unreasoning formulas, and peremptory dogmas of the scholastic method, could not long content his inquisitive and already revolted spirit. Luther had appeared; his doctrines had begun to shake the world, and the attention of theological students was as necessarily turned towards him and them, as that of astronomers to the apparition of a new planet or of a comet in the skies. The influence of this teacher, and the circumstances of Roodspere's youth, alike directed the first force of the impulse he received against the monastic notions and abuses which had played no inconsiderable a part in his mother's immolation, and had, in fact, given her the woe of martyrdom without its crown. Cranmer, also, had his tale of grief and persecution to relate, the consequences of his lawful indulgence in the most beautiful and holy of the passions of humanity. And all these causes working together, produced open manifestations from Roodspere—bursts of the flame a glow within—which might very naturally, he could not conceal from himself, have attracted the Cardinal's inquiry and anger. The rigour he had recently displayed, in the administration of his legative office, against the Reformers, also denoted some great change in his policy, which had formerly been conciliating, almost favour-

able, to their practical views. Roodspere was of course as ignorant as the rest of those not admitted to his confidence, that Wolsey had formed the project of dispossessing a man many years his junior, whom he could not hope to succeed, from the throne of orthodoxy, and that innovation had now become treason against his own projected spiritual sovereignty!

Yet amidst all these perturbing thoughts, Roodspere was not without gleams of an infinite peace and satisfaction. After mental throes and struggles which only those who have hung suspended over the abysses of religious doubt—who have had their most rooted beliefs torn from them by the whirlwinds of new opinion—can conceive, he had reached a secure standing place, where the dread adversaries that formerly beset him were powerless. He had passed through the valley of the shadow—he had vanquished the hydra—he had entered a haven of calm and settled faith! This was a vast gain—a priceless advantage! And besides, he rejoiced that by quitting the University he should enter on a course of action the consequences of which would be confined to himself. Persecution and suffering, the tender-hearted hero of theology imagined he could

endure, without shrinking, so long as those whom he loved did not share his afflictions!

Roodspere arrived in London, it might almost be said, for the first time, on this occasion. His former brief passage through it, on his sorrowful pilgrimage from Lymington, left few impressions on his pre-occupied and perturbed mind. But now, when he traversed its populous streets on his way to Westminster, and contemplated the evidences of wealth and power which the even then mighty city presented on all sides, his spirits rose with the reflection that the cause of the Reformation was believed, by more than its friends, to have made considerable, though covert, progress among the citizens of London—and still as the harvest of the ancient labours of Wicliffe. An event that happened a few years previously furnished some grounds for this supposition to the hopes of the Cambridge reformers. This was the celebrated case of Merchant—or as our ancestors pronounced the word—Marchant Hunne which we must somewhat detail, as it is intimately connected with the elucidation of certain mysterious events and personages in our future narrative.

In general it may be observed, that if reforming notions had made any visibly extensive

progress in England, at this period, it was in the great towns. The great towns furnished those early confessors and martyrs whose names are scarcely recorded, but the sparks from whose flaming stakes scattered everywhere the seeds of a conflagration which a sea of blood could not finally quench. The wealth and population of London, its enlarged intercourse, have in almost all ages of our history rendered it disposed to encourage new ideas, bold and resolute in support of them. The affair of Hunne was, however, nearly the first to awaken any startling suspicions of the spread of the new doctrines among its powerful citizenship.

Richard Hunne was a citizen of London, an inhabitant of the parish of St. Martin-le-Grand, where he carried on the business of court tailor. This parish, though in the heart of the city, was a dependency of the Abbey of Westminster, whose extensive possessions stretched in all directions beyond the district bearing the name. Hunne was wealthy, and apparently of a litigious disposition, for he had long rendered himself distasteful to those monastic superiors by his resistance to what they considered their dues, and he held to be usurpations and unfair exactions. It was no

unusual resource of clerical vengeance, in those days, to place such an opponent under the ban of suspicion in the article of religious belief. But from subsequent events it appeared that in this instance the monks of Westminster could allege more reasons for the persecution to which they subjected Marchant Hunne than the immediate cause of quarrel—which nevertheless touched them in a vital point.

Hunne drew on his head the lightnings of the cloud that had long gathered over him, by refusing to pay certain dues claimed by the curate of his parish on the burial of an infant child. The clerical functionary demanded as a mortuary the winding-sheet in which the little defunct was borne to the grave, or an equivalent sum in money. Hunne refused both, and with extraordinary audacity denied the right of the Church to exact either. The Abbey of Westminster, unwilling to be defrauded of its smallest gains, or owing Hunne a grudge for his imputed heretical opinions, took vehement part with its curate, and cited the recusant parishioner before the proper ecclesiastical tribunal. This was the full chapter of the Abbey itself, which owned no superior but the Roman Pontiff. Hunne had

perhaps no great confidence in the impartiality of a court so constituted, and but too craftily counselled by his lawyers, not only refused to plead his cause before it, but committed the still deadlier offence of appealing to the civil jurisdiction. Not content with even this audacity, he indicted his antagonists in a *præmunire* for exercising an unlawful jurisdiction. Such he alleged to be that of the ecclesiastical courts, which sate by authority of the Pope only—a foreign prince whom he asserted to have no jurisdiction over the subjects of the realm.

This resistance, which struck at the very root of their power, exasperated the entire body of the clergy to the highest degree. They retaliated with the utmost fury on Hunne—found or invented the groundwork of an accusation of heresy against him—and succeeded eventually in lodging him in prison on that formidable charge. While thus secluded, the merchant was either driven by despair to put an end to his own existence, or, in the more general belief, was destroyed by the malice of his clerical enemies.

Certain it was, at all events, that Hunne was found hanging in the prison belonging to the Abbey of Westminster, and that a coroner's jury affirmed he had been murdered therein.

It is true that the jury was composed of London citizens, friends and supporters of Hunne, naturally disposed to place the worst construction on the circumstances attending his immolation. The monks of Westminster were also in ill-repute with the citizens in general, for there were several points in which their interests clashed. But whether conscious of innocence, or hoping to blind suspicion, they seemed purposely to assemble a tribunal of those most likely to prove hostile to their exculpation. The results did not answer this astute calculation, if it was one. The London jury declared it was impossible Hunne could have destroyed himself in the manner exhibited; that he was not merely strangled, that his neck was broken! and that other marks of violence and foul play were visible on his person and in his place of confinement.

The Treasurer of Westminster, by whose orders Hunne had been captured—an old monk noted for his extreme severity and bigotry, whose office was similar to that of the archdeacon of a diocese—was upon this accused of the murder. The jailer, and a half-witted lad who occasionly had charge of the keys, were associated in the accusation. According to the London jurors these were

the only persons who had motives or means to commit the crime. The jailer vindicated himself, or endeavoured to do so, by alleging he was absent from his post on the night of his prisoner's death. But he could only produce two or three of the disorderly reprobates of the sanctuary of Westminster, and one of the monks, whose jovial but dissolute character affixed no weight of credibility to his evidence, to prove the pretended alibi. On the other hand, his half-witted coadjutor, who was commonly called "Smiling Willie," lent a wild but horrible support to the popular opinion, in a revelation which he made at the inquest. He declared that it was true he was left by the jailer, Joakin Mugwort, in charge of the keys and of the prisoner, whose violent demeanour had forced the Treasurer to order him to be placed in a species of durance called the "Iron Clogs," kept to restrain such refractory guests. These consisted of a pair of metal sandals of great weight, riveted to the floor, in which the prisoner's feet were secured by latches and padlocks. Smiling Willie proceeded to aver that in the middle of the night the devil, disguised as one of the Abbey monks, entered the jail, and informing him that he had come for the soul of the captive heretic, ordered him

to open the way to his place of confinement. It appeared that he recognised this terrific visitant by his horse-hoofs, a ghastly horned visage under his cowl, and eyes which shot out long livid streams of flame! Not daring to disobey so potent a command, he escorted the infernal apparitor to the prisoner's dungeon, which was at the top of a high tower called the Gatehouse of Westminster. He was then ordered to remain at the door and deliver his torch to the fiend, who entered Hunne's chamber alone. The half-wit affirmed that at this time Hunne was firmly secured in the iron clogs, and awake, for he saw his eyes gleaming in the sudden flash of the light. He also showed great marks of terror and confusion at the aspect of his visitor; but Smiling Willie was instantly signed to withdraw, and was himself so frightened that he remembered little of what followed but a sound of vehement dispute between the prisoner and the Evil One, concluding with a great uproar, after which was a silence of some fifteen minutes, for he heard the quarter bell of the Abbey strike twice—followed by the abrupt departure of the Evil Spirit, who rushed past him, and disappeared in a whirlwind of flame!

Unhappily for themselves, the monks of

Westminster, whether superstitiously or craftily, adopted this marvellous view of the case, and unanimously justified themselves and their officers by asserting that the devil had actually exercised this signal vengeance on the heretic prisoner! But the London jurors, on the contrary, adopted only so much of the evidence as coincided with their own opinions, and concluded that Hunne had been murdered by one of the monks, a worthy representative of the evil agency alleged. Old and infirm as the Treasurer was, it seemed to them very possible that he might have strangled a man so shackled as Hunne was admitted to have been, who was also of slender frame and past the age of physical energy. In vain did the Treasurer prove by the evidence of his fellow conventuals that he spent the night in an entirely different part of the Abbey, engaged in devotion at the shrine of St. Edward, in the church. This defence only increased suspicion, since there was no one who could attest the positive fact of the Treasurer's tarriance there. And if all had united in the assurance, it would have produced probably no effect. It was so much the interest of all to prove the innocence of their official!

A wild and general ferment ensued. The

relations of Hunne, at least his numerous issue by a first wife—a young widow whom he left played a very different part—filled all men's ears with cries for justice. Proceeding on the coroner's verdict, Hunne's children procured a warrant against the parties accused, and attempted to put it in force within the privileged precincts of the Abbey of Westminster. But the Treasurer pleaded his clerical exemption, and refused to surrender, or to make his appearance before any lay tribunal, while his supposed accomplices took refuge in the Sanctuary of Westminster, whither the officers of the city dared not follow them. Naturally exasperated, and supported by the entire body of the citizens, the children of Hunne appealed to the highest civil jurisdiction, and to the king himself, with clamours that could neither be silenced nor evaded. Thence events arose, at one time threatening momentous consequences. The opposite pretensions of the lay and ecclesiastical powers were suddenly brought into sharp collision. Cardinal Wolsey, as head of the English church, found himself placed in dangerous antagonism to the king, as head of the state. The party in the court secretly banded against him, from the earliest hours of his supremacy, managed to persuade

the haughty Henry that his prerogative was in question, and that it was a fitting time to put some limit on the excessive power of the clergy. But Wolsey was not inclined to risk his favour with the king, even in behalf of the body with which his profession identified him. Perhaps he was in some measure governed by the little esteem or liking he had for the monastic order, whose interests were immediately concerned. He yielded the privileges of the Church, maintained so long in the face of reason and expediency, and sanctified by the blood of his own patron saint, A'Becket. He surrendered the Treasurer, who had submitted himself to his judgment, and his alleged accomplices, for trial before the civil tribunals. He even violated the privileges of the Sanctuary of Westminster to effect this object, which the most daring princes and statesmen had hitherto feared in any manner to assail.

It was at this stage of the extraordinary case of Marchant Hunne that it took one of the most astounding developments the eyes of civilised men, not yet inured to religious persecutions and cruelty, had witnessed. The Abbey of Westminster, seconded by the majority of the exasperated clergy of London,

resumed the process of heresy against Hunne, dead as he was, murdered as he was alleged to be! A great number of the chiefs of the monastic establishments of London, headed by its fanatic bishop, Fitzjames, and a competent band of learned doctors, assembled in conclave in the Chapterhouse of Westminster. These Courts of Inquisition were usually secret ones, as it was alleged, to prevent the contamination of heretical opinions being diffused by the very means taken for their suppression. It was so on this occasion; but the results were made audaciously open and manifest. The court proceeded in a trial of the defunct with all the formalities observed towards living persons accused of heresy; examined witnesses, admitted the charges as proved, and condemned the *dead body* of Marchant Hunne to suffer the penalties of the offence! "The vile Lollardy of London," as an anonymous chronicler of the Abbey calls them, were indeed struck with amazement when they heard their opponents were resolved to assert the justice of their proceedings, by burning, as a heretic and suicide, the corpse of the man they were accused of having murdered!

Roodspere had more reasons than the sympathy natural to a member of the same perse-

cuted sect, to keep this ghastly event in his recollection. It happened that it was enacted on the very day when he arrived in London, on his painful journey from Lymington. Turned from the gates of York Place with tidings of Wolsey's absence at Hampton Court, he was advised by a charitable beggar, who observed his kindred destitution, to apply for food and lodging at the neighbouring Abbey of Westminster. He was assured of its hospitality and liberality to the poor, especially to those who either feigned or came on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Edward—a business which secured all who chose to allege it a week's dole and harbourage. This latter suggestion the honest country lad would not adopt—the former he did. But to his surprise he arrived, not in the precincts of a peaceful abbey, among quiet monks, but in the midst of a tumultuous rabble, who guarded the execution of their lords' barbarous sentence on the body of Hunne!

Though perfectly unacquainted at that time with the circumstances of the case, its dreadful accompaniments riveted the event in Roodspere's memory. Nearly three weeks had elapsed since the death of Hunne, however occasioned, and his body had continued un-

buried, in the Gatehouse-jail. Hitherto the monks alleged they kept it to prevent their enemies mutilating it to support their accusation, while the Londoners and Hunne's relations declared it was done to prevent the evidences of their guilt being made manifest. It now appeared that it was preserved with the intention of visiting the senseless carcass with the punishments assigned to the supposed spiritual aberrations of its defunct owner.

Roodspere remembered the whole scene long after with the utmost distinctness. It took place in the churchyard before the Abbey; and though the execution of the sentence followed almost immediately on its promulgation, a great crowd had assembled to witness it. It was chiefly composed of denizens of the Sanctuary—friends and clients of the monks of Westminster. The latter allowed as little time as possible for any gathering of the Londoners which, in the excited state of men's minds, might have been attended with danger. The same motive, perhaps, influenced the monks in their determination that the execution should take place within their proper precincts, instead of in the more usual place of cremation at Smithfield. Some, however, asserted that the Abbey feared lest it should

ackowledge a jurisdiction of the Bishop of London in its affairs, if the punishment were inflicted in that prelate's limits.

Roodspere's rustic and ragged appearance insured his admission to the precincts—the rural and vagabond populations were believed to be devoted to the monasteries, from which they received many great benefits. He found himself, then, the spectator of a scene whose strangely horrible accompaniments fixed its minutiæ in his memory. The gallery over the great north entrance of the Abbey church was crowded with the black-robed monks of Westminster, and a conclave of the high dignitaries who had adjudged Hunne's corpse to the flames. Mitres and croziers and magnificent robes abounded in this assemblage of ecclesiastical magnates. The group represented, indeed, the entire body of the London clergy. Three bishops were present; and nearly all the chiefs of the numerous monastic establishments of the capital—black, white, grey, and brown —from the Abbot of Westminster to the humblest prior, evinced by their attendance their hearty concurrence in the strange and terrible resolution about to be enforced. The abbot was an old man, of a noble and benevolent countenance, gorgeously robed, with a

jewelled mitre and crozier, who, to his credit be it said, sate in his carved and gilded chair, or throne, with a look of much disquiet and distaste.

Almost facing the north-gate of the church, commonly called Solomon's Porch, was the Gatehouse prison, on the opposite side of the churchyard. It was a massive square tower over a deep archway, which admitted into the sanctuary town of Westminster, and was defended by a raised portcullis, as by the jagged teeth of a whale ready to close on its prey. Accordingly it was commonly known as Jonah's Jaw—but much more rarely than the one the prophet fell into, disgorged its luckless prey. Between the Abbey and this prison, to the west of the little church, or chapel, of St. Margaret, was a space of a circular form, with a huge granite stone in the middle, called the Place of the Ordeal. The abbey traditions averred that it was here, and not at Winchester, as rival traditions asserted, that the mother of the Confessor, Queen Emma, passed over nine burning ploughshares, blindfold yet unharmed, in proof of her innocence of the incontinence imputed to her with her spiritual guide, Bishop Alwin. It is more certain that from an era as remote it

was the spot where the judgments of God by fire, water, and personal combat, were allowed under the Abbey authorities, to such of their vassalage as claimed the privilege. But these barbarous appeals had long fallen into disuse, and the Place of the Ordeal was usually distiguished by a large wooden crucifixion set in a socket hollowed in the judgment-stone. This emblem of mercy and redemption was now removed to make room for a tall stake, some ten feet high, set round with faggots and shavings. A cask of pitch stood ready at hand to heighten the blaze; and from these circumstances, and the aspect of the armed yeomen surrounding the stake, with the Abbey's badge of a cock on their partisans, Roodspere was suddenly seized with the conviction that he had accidentally stumbled on the actual performance of one of those prodigious species of execution which had long excited his childish horror and dread in the mere report. He turned with an aghast look to make the inquiry of a person near whom he stood—a man in a very shabby suit of lawyer's robes, who was watching the scene with evident interest, and who seemed struck with the ingenuous horror depicted in Roodspere's countenance. He informed him of the particulars of the case with a degree of

sardonic coolness, though with a brevity and clearness that denoted he was thoroughly acquainted with the facts. Nevertheless the vehement expression of Roodspere's horror and amazement, even at the calm and unimpassioned account he gave him, visibly stirred his curiosity. In his turn the lawyer addressed some careless but very skilful queries to elicit the antecedents of his strange companion, whose manner and conversation coincided so little with his rude and beggarly array. And somehow or another, before the dreadful spectacle they were to witness came to exhibition, the ragged rustic and the seedy-garbed man of laws had established a species of confidential communion very singular in perfect strangers, and on topics so perilous.

The bailiff of Westminster, a man of knightly rank, in whose family the office was hereditary, with the assistance of his yeomen, had meanwhile cleared a space between the Abbey and the Gate house with some difficulty, for the mob were packed as closely as the cobblestones of a pavement. As soon as this was effected, the joy-bells of the Abbey, called Susanna and the Elders, began to ring merrily, and, simultaneously, two proces-

sions emerged—one from the prison, the other from the church. The former carried in its ranks the condemned corpse, stretched on a bier, and consisted of the javelin men belonging to the bailliewick of Westminster. The latter was altogether of monks, headed by the principal officials of the monastery.

Roodspere was horrified by the certainty that he beheld the body of Marchant Hunne on the bier, though it was covered by a piece of black pitchcloth, from which a boot projecting in one direction, and a motionless purple hand in another, alone announced that the person of a human being was concealed below. He heard the murmur of the rabble muttering "the heretic, the heretic!" and his companion, the man of laws, gave a still more emphatic recognition. "Let us push on, my good rural," he exclaimed, "and get as nigh the body as we can! I must tell you that Hunne was my client—and I long above all things to verify whether the poor man's neck is broken, as the jury say, by murder; or simply twisted, as the monks say, by suicide, or some directer devil! Thou art doubtless well skilled in the strangling of poultry, and

may give us the benefit of thy judgment on the condition of this fowl of Diogenes!"

Roodspere complied, though too much horrified to relish the bantering tone of the lawyer, who perhaps, however, adopted it to conceal his own emotion; and thus, availing himself of the route which the latter's strength hurtled for them through the crowd, he became a nigh spectator of the events that followed.

CHAPTER V.

DOMINUS SANCGRAAL.

Ev'n like a temple, where the owls retreat,
And the bats lodge within long-moulder'd shrines,
Ope but a window, let a sun-burst in,—
And what a screaming anarchy awakes
Where falls the light, or sounding footstep comes!
ROBERT MONTGOMERY'S "LUTHER."

ACCORDING to custom, an orator was appointed to go through the ceremony of declaring the heresies of the condemned, and delivering the body of Marchant Hunne to the secular power. In this case, merely from hand to hand, for the Abbey exercised the civil judicature over its extensive domains. One of the monks of Westminster, in the black robe and white scapulary appropriate to the Benedictine order, presented himself for the purpose. The office seemed not to have been coveted by the dignitaries of the monastery, since it was confided to a young monk, whose personal characteristics, nevertheless, betrayed some remarkable

fitness for the task. He was of a low stature, or else an habitual stoop in his figure produced the impression—lean and sinewy, and distinguished by a peculiar writhing movement in his gait, and the ominous addition of a club-foot. The popular imagination identified this deformity as an infallible characteristic of the Prince of Darkness himself, and a peasant boy could not be supposed to have unlearned the prejudice. Yet, in after years, when retracing the recollections of the dismal scene, Roodspere could not well imagine why he was seized with so profound a dread and dislike towards the person of a man whom he had never seen before, and might never see again! But so it was. And when the monk—moving with an irregular impulse, not unlike the writhings of a wounded snake—mounted the judgment-stone to deliver the decretal he had in charge, the impression produced by his peculiar malformation deepened in Roodspere's rustic imagination. His head was disproportionately large, and his physiognomy combined some singular and startling incongruities. A forehead of great breadth and intellectual expansion, upper features all well and even nobly carved, could not balance the unfavourable effect of the lower visage, which was coarse and sensual in a

marked degree. Satyr and demigod seemed united in the expression—so fraught with vehement and lurid passions, intellect, and powerful will, it was! The workings of a fiery though suppressed organization appeared amidst all the laboured calm of the countenance. Those dark, sultry eyes were in a manner caverned in the hollow arching of the brows, the nostrils quivered spasmodically, the bloodless complexion was overspread with a deep leaden pallor. The monk had almost the look of one who had long been a physical captive, and who, after years of vain struggle and resistance, had sunk into the apathy of the covered but not extinct volcano! He was still evidently a young man; but the baldness of the monastic tonsure, round which the short black curls of his hair clung like soot, added very probably to the age indicated by that worn but imposing physiognomy.

The post of danger is seldom one of rivalry; but Roodspere's companion, the seedy man of laws, appeared to be struck with the circumstance that the office of delivering Hunne's body to the flames had been confided to this young monk. He made inquiries, however, which ascertained some reasons for the choice. Roodspere shared the benefit of the informa-

tion elicited from several of the bystanders, among whom were two of the softer sex, who, with great toil and hazard, had thrust themselves into a position whence they could obtain an advantageous view of so singular a spectacle as that of a roasted dead body promised to be. The representative of the Abbey on this occasion, they said, was one of its youngest but most distinguished brethren. His proper name was Bigod, and he was of the great branch of that ancient and most noble family settled at Chepstow Castle, in Monmouthshire. But he was called Sancgraal in his monastery, after the subject of so many of the religious and chivalric romances of the age—the Sanct Graal, or Holy Platter, from which the Saviour was believed to have eaten the Last Supper. The nobility of his birth procured him in addition the title of Dominus Sancgraal, even among his monastic brethren, with whom worldly distinctions were supposed to have no place. Another circumstance rendered it remarkable among them. He was said to have been born in the Abbey church itself, the noble lady, his mother, being taken with premature travail in the sacred enclosure, whither she had come on a pilgrimage to St. Edward. Dominus Sancgraal had been educated and brought up

from early childhood within the walls of the Abbey, and had long been considered as destined to prove not only an ornament to the order whose habit he wore, but to the entire church. He was already esteemed a master of scholastic theology, and a most eloquent preacher and orator, both in Latin and English. Moreover, he was popular, even among the Londoners, for his skill in church spectacles, and the extraordinary splendour of the dramatic exhibitions which, under the names of Mysteries and Moralities, were still esteemed fitting clerical displays, of which he made Westminster Abbey the theatre.

A dozen contending voices heaped this information upon the questioning man of laws. The women added, that the young monk was a miracle of virtue and holiness, and that he held women in such special horror and aversion that he was never known to lift his eyes in their presence, unless in the pulpit or confessional. It appeared to be a received opinion throughout the Abbey vassalage that this ascetic conventual, though he held as yet no dignity in the monastery, was the destined successor of the aged Abbot, Islip. His extraordinary talents, and renown for severity of morals and sanctity, rendered him apparently a very fitting

one. Recent services added to his claims. Induced, perhaps, in some measure, by gratitude and affection for his tutor and trainer, the imprisoned Treasurer, he had taken strenuous part in the resistance offered by the Abbey to the attacks of that functionary's accusers, and was the main instrument in procuring the condemnation of the heretic corpse. With a determination and courage, recalling the audacity of a St. Dunstan or a Becket, he had urged the consistory of London on the extraordinary step it had taken, whereby the clergy evidently asserted the community of their cause with that of the Treasurer of Westminster, and their resolution to stand by him in the danger and tribulation he had fallen into.

Considering all these circumstances, the man of laws observed to Roodspere, that a better choice of an orator on the occasion could scarcely have been made—and Dominus Sancgraal's discourse and demeanour fully justified the doubtful approbation thus implied. The young Benedictine awaited until the noise made by the populace, on the first appearance of Hunne's body, gradually subsided, like the swinging and clattering of sails and yards from a sudden gust of wind. Meanwhile, he kept his eyes fixed on the ground with a sombre humility

that, nevertheless, excited the awe and attention of his auditors more than the most vehement summons. When at length silence was established, it was of something deeper and stiller than mere curiosity—and then a voice of extraordinary volume and power, but carefully preserving a low and respectful tone, which wonderfully gained on a populace so little accustomed to any marks of deference from its superiors, sounded yet to the most remote and indifferent hearing.

Roodspere long remembered the chief matter, and some of the very words of this remakable harangue. "Masters and friends!" began the monkish orator, in the insinuating manner he had assumed, "I am here by the commandment of my lawful superiors, whom I am bound to obey were it even to the death. *Sancta obedientia!*—we poor monks were therefore instituted, merely to obey—implicitly as the very mechanism of men's hands, but more skilfully. Therefore I pray you hear me patiently, for I must do my bidding, whatever comes of it—to men's liking or against it. I am here to declare to you for what cause the miserable carcass of Richard Hunne is this day to be delivered to the flames. His soul already burns in the unquenchable fires of hell! whither he has cast himself, like

him of old who plunged into the jaws of Etna, leaving his brazen sandals upon the rim to attest that himself alone had done the deed! These are the articles on which Richard Hunne is condemned, whereon pondering ye will well perceive both that he merited his fate, and that it needed no privy and contrived murther, as the raving Lollards of London pretend, to have brought him to his just doom! Is there any here will say that these following assertions are not of the foulest heretic pravity? If so, they are fautors and allies of yonder condemned heretic, the foul stench of whose carcass less taints the air than while he lived his doctrines did corrupt men's consciences!"

"A sweet invitation to an argument," muttered the lawyer to Roodspere. "The monks keep their meats, in sooth, too long before they cook them! yet I could be nigh tempted to try conclusions with this smooth-spoken, lamenting young hyena, forsooth!"

The monk had, meanwhile, produced a parchment, portentously signed and sealed, doubtless the sentence of the court which had condemned Hunne. But satisfied with exciting expectation, he continued his discourse with an eloquence and power that excited the admiration and wonder even of the censorious

lawyer, and riveted the attention of the populace. This monk, indeed, possessed some of the most valuable qualities of a popular orator—vehemence, passion—a command of the most effectual and picturesque language—an imagination of singular splendour—and, notwithstanding the gloom and terror of his subject, a species of lurid gaiety shone like the play of lightning over his murky and tempestuous fancies, and a grotesque though sombre humour occasionally mingled with them, always successful in rousing the laughter of the multitude.

"But I will give you my text first, good brethren," he continued, "inasmuch as an oration without a text is even as a ship without a rudder, or a steed without a bridle—or a woman *with* a tongue, which knows less of governance! "*Est blasphemia in castris!*" There is blasphemy in the camp!—Well may I say so since Hunne committed his heresies, and hath found so many favourers and supporters, in this very patrimony of St. Peter of Westminster, in the court itself of our most dread and religious prince! My masters, the text is from Joshua; but albeit of holy writ, never was it truer than now! Good sirs, minstrels and others who tell of the deeds of the holy knights of old (for of profane chivalry

it behoves not us poor silly monks in the world's devices to give our foolish opinion!) do oft rehearse the great combat of the valiant knight, St. George, with the pestilent dragon that ravaged the world in his day. God keep the good knight's soul! We of Westminster have one of his noble limbs, his stalwart thigh, whereon the lance of the faith was so often couched of yore against the Saracen infidel! Fearful and horrible to behold was that deadly worm! Its vast mouth yawned like the pit of hell; its teeth were sharp and glittering as scythes; its accursed throat black and devouring as the stinking sea-marshes of Essex! The scales of its monstrous body were purple as the Syrian plague, harder than diamond, flashing with a blinding light! Yet, sirs, I tell ye, the dragon St. George fought withal was innocent and harmless as a lamb frisking among the buttercups in spring, compared with the Dragon of Heresy which hell has spawned upon the earth in our days under the name of Martin Luther! The dragon of St. George did but devour the mortal carcasses of men—the dragon of Wittenberg devours their undying souls! God, then, and our Lord and our blessed Lady to the rescue, for this dragon is fairly among us now!

"For truly, sirs, what guided St. George on his woful way to the dragon's cave? Gnawed bones, mangled remnants of the slaughtered wretches whose blood and marrow had glutted the infernal monster's appetite! And what see we around us now, wherever we turn our sorrowing eyes? What see we here?"

The monk indicated the motionless configuration at his feet, but without looking at it. Yet a strange spasm distorted his visage for an instant, and a deeper pallor settled on his countenance, as if his own imagination, without artifice of rhetoric, had raised a sufficiently appalling view.

"What *can* we see through that pitchy bearing-sheet? The devil give it ye back for a mortuary!" muttered the lawyer between his teeth.

"Yea, here is the mangled carcass of one of the heretic dragon's victims—here at our feet!" continued the orator. "For that Richard Hunne was a most potent and pestilent heretic, none but his fellows and followers (in bale also, I trust, Amen), will deny in face of the plain and evident truths which now I shall rehearse! Our war with him begins not now; from the very first of his dwelling in our bounds he has been a sharp

pesterer and perturbator of our peace. From the very first he refused our clearest dues, and disdained our sway. Even on our blessed saint's feast-day, he has ever refused to be so much as a tester to the decoration of his altar. But St. Edward has repaid him! And on those occasions it was that he openly maintained one of his worst heresies, saying that the homage and worship paid to the saints was a rank idolatry! Finding there was no law to compel sinful men to what, on the contrary, were ever voluntary offerings on that behalf, he next denied our right to the tithes and dues of our advowson of St. Martin's-within-the-walls, maintaining that tithes were not of God's ordination, but of the covetousness of bishops and priests! But in that quarrel the might as well as the right were with us, and we cast him in grievous penalties, even as St. Michael trampled Lucifer! We had then rest awhile from his persecutions; but meanwhile he continued his secret wicked doings in spreading the pernicious doctrines of Martin among the citizens of London, or rather those of another and still more detestable heresy which has lately arisen in France. One Calvin is the devil's apostle there, who, dethroning Divine Providence, avouches that men and all they

do are governed by a blind fatality! Among others whom he strove thus to corrupt was his wife, Maudelyn Brandwich, an honest man's daughter in the Vintry. But she being even more plenteously endued, as I have heard, with inner than outward graces, and very devote to our holy St. Edward, turned a deaf ear to all his false arguments and suasions. Thence arose dissensions and jars between them; and now Hunne, espying that she was fortified in the struggle by the good counsels and reasonings of her confessor, our Treasurer, who, for the church's sake, is, at this very time, suffering grievous persecution, strove to deprive her of her last support and consolation, commanding her, under heavy threats, to frequent the Abbey no more. But Mistress Hunne, knowing well that God is to be obeyed rather than man, set no store by his prohibition. Whereupon he waxed so ireful and deadly in his cruelty and persecution, that she was obliged, being in danger of her life, to take refuge in our sanctuary. Truly, then, because our Treasurer, as was his duty, persisted in refusing to allow her to be dragged thence by force, the infuriate and possessed wretch, her husband, invented the vilest and most calumnious reports against us—pretending that our Trea-

surer, an aged and mortified man, kept her there for a carnal love and liking toward the beauty of the woman herself!

"Not satisfied with the propagation of this most false and infamous scandal, Hunne continued to annoy and molest our Abbey in all manner of ways, stirring up his parochials to resist our claims in a body—calling St. Edward a micher and a thief, because we took his altar-dues by force, being thereto compelled by an undutiful resistance. And, finally, when the infant man-child which, Heaven be praised! was the sole issue of the ill-starred union of that unhappy girl with old Dickon Hunne, fell a victim to his neglect and maltreatment, after he had driven the mother from her home—yea, and the bitter nursing of his beetle-browed daughter, Margaret, who I doubt not weaned it with a dug steeped in vinegar—when the poor infant perished, I say, out of his revenge and malignancy against the refuged mother, and us who had saved her from his wild-wolf rage, he refused one of the clearest and most ancient dues of the church, in the payment of a mortuary on the interment! Whence it came to pass that the child was buried without Christian rites, cast like a puppy dog into a ditch!"

This latter statement awakened a deep feeling of indignation in the majority of the audience, especially among the women. Sobs, mingled with groans of execration and wrath, were audible on all sides. Encouraged by these signs of popular adhesion, the orator adopted a bolder and haughtier tone in continuation. He proceeded to relate the desperate resistance made by the "old miser," as he frequently styled Marchant Hunne, to the exaction of the just claims of his spiritual lords, and his final recourse to the envenomed disobedience of an appeal to the lay tribunals, and the obtaining of the *præmunire*, which, if successful, would have subjected the whole clergy of the realm to the royal prerogative, and for ever have destroyed the holy and necessary connexion between all Christian communities and their supreme mother and foundress, Rome! But the patience of heaven was at last exhausted, and the incessant tears of our Lady of Westminster, the orator declared, moved her almighty son to interfere on behalf of his menaced church. Inspired by these supreme guardians—Roodspere, young and ignorant as he then was, heard with speechless horror—Hunne's ill-used wife made open confession of his heresies and misdeeds, and furnished ample justification of

his arrest and intended doom, which could only have been recantation or the stake! But the wretch, according to Dominus Sancgraal, prevented the solemn and memorable act of justice and retribution purposed, by taking execution in his own hand! The fiend, according to equally credible testimony, had come for his forfeit soul in person—had loosened his bonds, and put the means of destruction in his grasp! And yet, because the Treasurer of Westminster had manfully done his duty in the affair—because Hunne's wife happened to be a woman of singular beauty, in the judgment of those who regard such outward fleshly shows of corruption!—because it so chanced that he was the first to visit the prisoner on the morning after his death and cut him down, that devote functionary was accused of murder!—of a murder which foiled his own most ardent purpose—by the open punishment of the offender to deter others from following in his damned steps! "Yea, there are some that scruple not to declare," continued the orator, "that a monk's robe and cowl, much torn and handled, were found in the dungeon, and were by the Treasurer surreptitiously removed! Infinite lie! For what had he else to do but to produce it and clear himself, if it belonged not to

him? And who could imagine, if it did, that he would have summoned witnesses, with vehement outcries, at once to the spot? That he would have sent for a jury of the perjured London Lollards to sit in judgment on the body? And what needed we with the blood of Hunne, so shed, or its free current to choke in his old veins? That we had sufficient evidence to convict him of his heresies, here is the proof—that we have sentenced him dead, and that his body is here to abye the penalties! A solemn trial has been granted to the accused, and by the witnessing of his wife, Maudelyn Hunne, and many concurring testimony, he was found guilty of the charges, to the woful satisfaction of the entire Consistory of London! Masters and friends, these are the accusations proven against him."

Dominus Sancgraal returned to the point from which he had diverged, and read, in a loud, and now imperious tone, the items of the parchment he held in his hand. From which it appeared that Maudelyn Hunne, Richard's wife, electing rather to bear witness against her own heart's blood than to sin with it against the Holy Ghost, in the matter of heresy, freely and without compulsion, confessed that the said Richard Hunne had in

secret keeping divers English books, prohibited and damned by the law: as the Epistles and Gospels in English, Wicliffe's damnable works, and others of a certain Frenchman, written in Latin, containing errors infinite—in the which he had been a long time accustomed to read, teach, and study daily. Search being made for the said books, they were found hidden under a plank in his sleeping chamber. Among them, a Bible of the said obstinate heretic Wicliffe, whose bones were burned to ashes, and dispersed to the winds, forty and one years after his death, by order of the great and reverend council of Constance, which also solemnly condemned his teaching as heretical. "This Bible," continued the orator, "we found all scrawled over with annotations in his own hand, wherein, item, he taught, that bishops and priests be teachers and preachers, but no doers; neither fulfillers of the law of God, but catching, ravening, and all things taking, and nothing ministering, neither giving!

"Item, he asserts the inevitableness of all things, and denies the providence and almight of God.

"Item, his wife confesses and makes oath, that he would oft declare, with imprecations

of the most holy name, that he would in no wise submit him to the decrees and interpretations of the church, but would use his own judgment in the Scriptures, to guide him aright. Forsooth, it was his saying—What need of torches in daylight? As if the blind could see by any light at all! Item, he denied the power and worship of Our Lady, for when his wife, being in the mortal throes and anguish of childbirth, called on our Lady of Westminster for aid, he sharply rebuked her, saying 'Our Lady hath no power to aid thee, foolish woman! being but a log of wood, and a marvellous ill-favoured one too!' But why should I further sadden and profane the ears of christian men with details of the enormities for which Hunne's carcass is justly condemned to the flames? If any man be desirous to know the specialty of these articles, let him come to me privily and I will show to him the whole record. At present, kind friends and masters—"

"Cry your mercy, my lord monk," interrupted a voice at this moment, and, to Roodspere's surprise and admiration, his companion, the lawyer, stepped boldly forward, and challenged attention. "Cry your mercy! but, by your leave, I must enter a protest on behalf of this silent

defendant at your feet! He was my client, and I made his pleas, yea, and argued them all at length, and, whatsoever his wicked wife may aver to the contrary, I maintain that Richard Hunne never denied the clergy's right to all tithes, but simply to the mortuary of his infant defunct, which having no property, could forfeit none by demise, attaint or otherwise! Likewise that all bishops and priests were Pharisees and hypocrites, he nowhere maintained, but that ye of Westminster, and my Lord of London, who persecuted him to the death, were so, in his passion, he may have averred! Truly or not, I leave to clearer judgments! But angry men, the proverb says, may rail!—What he spoke of the ravening and greediness of the clergy, he spoke of ye of Westminster in particular, not in general! What ye say he spoke, as denying the providence of God, was in no wise so; but rather he asserted its immutability and predestination! Whether he had those books or not, whereof ye speak, I cannot say; but if his wife heard him read out of them, it hath been to little purpose! And if he spoke scandal of your monastery, God alone knows it, and in His good time will do him justice, and ye too! Meanwhile, I

must plainly tell you to your faces, if ye would prove your innocence of the bloodguiltiness laid to your charges, ye take an ill way, to muffle the corpse thus from all men's sight, and to purpose its utter consuming, as if thereby ye could hide it from God's eyes also! Moreover, refusing, as ye do, to abide a fair, open, and legal trial of a jury of the country!"

During the delivery of this astonishing replication, the Westminster monk continued to gaze in petrified wonder at the daring speaker. He felt, perhaps, like a pugilist in a country fair, displaying his science before a ring of gaping rustics, who suddenly perceives a gladiator of equal accomplishments step forth to the encounter. He did not recover completely from his amazement until the adventurous man of laws had completed his energetic protest. But he did so then in very orthodox style.

"Master Cromwel! the heretic and blasphemous scrivener, who spurted Hunne's venom upon us for so long a season, and invented the *præmunire* against us which still works to our detriment!—who is the cause why our innocent Treasurer must either wear out his last sands in a dismal, plague-haunted jail, or betray the liberties of the church, and

the blood of holy A'Becket, shed in their maintenance! Good brethren! ye who eat the bread of the church at her gates! put him forth; if ye would not St. Edward himself should arise from his sepulchre to accurse ye as his false and ungrateful bedesmen!"

This decree was instantly executed, and in the roughest manner. A mob, consisting of the most ferocious reprobates of the Sanctuary, rushed in upon the bold man of laws—who made an energetic but useless resistance, for some instants, during which Roodspere was thrown down, and severely trampled. When he rose again, he perceived Master Cromwel—as it appeared was his name—hurled out of the Abbey gates, amidst a savage shouting multitude, who covered him with blows and mud. His voice was lost amidst the uproar, but his gesture still evinced defiance, and he shook his clenched fist, as he was thus violently hurried out, at the monk. The latter stood calmly looking on, with folded arms, and a smile of withering contempt; but rather, as it seemed to Roodspere, at the executants of his will than at his antagonist. He then proceeded in the interrupted ceremonial as if nothing had occurred; read the sentence on Humne, and the long list of dignified signatures that fol-

lowed the decree, with emphatic slowness, concluding with the formula of delivering the body to the secular power, to be dealt with according to law. He omitted, however, the usual mockery of entreating the said power to show mercy to the condemned, and on the contrary pronounced, with relentless emphasis, the words of the curse sealing the excommunication of a heretic—"And may his soul, like his body, consume, burn, and stink in everlasting flames. Amen!"

Dominus Sancgraal then turned to the high Bailiff, and again indicating without glancing towards the muffled victim at his feet, he signed himself with the cross, and murmuring in a lower tone "In nomine Domini. Amen!" he descended from the Stone of the Ordeal. Then, and then only, did any sign of human feeling betray itself in the countenance or manner of this statue of bigoted zeal. He staggered as he reached the ground, a dark flush visited his countenance, and drawing his mantle tightly around him, he avoided, with an expression of horror and disgust, a stream of dark liquid which had oozed from the already corrupted carcass. He then glided rapidly away through the opening masses of the populace, and a general movement took

place towards the stake. Among the foremost of the pressing multitude was Roodspere, induced by a vague and yet terrible and absorbing curiosity, probably stirred by the lawyer's suggestions. The Bailiff's men raised the bier, the pitchcloth was removed, and the body of Marchant Hunne was exposed to the gaze of all who chose to look upon so sad a spectacle, festering in the garments it had worn in life. The furred gown and golden chain of the chief of an honourable guild still remained upon him, as if his enemies deemed the contagion of his heresies could be propagated by the articles of his wear. But all speculation as to the state of his neck, whether fractured or twisted, was prevented by the fact that the girdle on which he was found hanging was coiled around it so tightly that it was kept rigid, even when the attendants raised the body.

Roodspere averted his eyes with horror from the ghastly countenance, already far advanced towards decomposition. Or perhaps the fascination of a look darted upon him from the depths of a monk's cowl, in the distance, called it off, and he perceived that Dominus Sancgraal's eyes were fixed upon him with a vague, unfathomable, but terrible expression,

which haunted him for years after. The monk disappeared the next moment under the arch of Solomon's Porch, followed by the rest of the brotherhood, chaunting a dreary *Te Deum*—and Roodspere's gaze reverted, in spite of himself, to the dreadful scene of action. The body of Marchant Hunne was by this time lifted from the bier to the stake, chained to it—the faggots piled—and amidst an universal shout of triumph from the mob, fired! But the heart of Raphael Roodspere gave no echo, sympathetic as it was in all its chords, to that burst of brutish exultation. A sense of the injustice, the cruelty, the perversion of all reason, in what he witnessed swelled in his young bosom in directly contrary ratio to the applause of the multitude, and burst from his lips in a cry of horror and execration that pierced distinctly over all the uproar of approbation, and seemed like the solitary protest of humanity!

Smoke and flame speedily obscured all view of the corpse; yet Roodspere continued to fix his horror-fascinated eyes upon it, until a chance waft of air suddenly gave him a last view of the consuming victim. And then, either his imagination worked an hallucination on his strained vision, or else he saw, that the

girdle twisted round Hunne's neck being burned away, his head had fallen brokenly on his chest, so that it seemed evident the spine was fractured! But again the smoke and flames enveloped the martyr-corpse; and in a few minutes only a heap of black dust, piled circularly round the Stone of the Ordeal, remained to testify that the act of immolation was completed!

Roodspere was hungry, footsore; houseless, friendless, utterly exhausted by toil and privation!—yet he asked neither food nor lodging that night at the Abbey of Westminster.

CHAPTER VI.

YORK PLACE.

All so fast as that he may
He rod to Charynge Cross.
KING ATHELSTANE.

THE approach to Westminster recalled to Roodspere's recollection the dismal associations connected with the case of Marchant Hunne —which had never wholly ceased to haunt it— with renewed vividness. These clung to his memory more tenaciously from the mysterious and enigmatical circumstances involved, and the prodigious desecration of the holiest and tenderest rights of humanity! That Hunne's own wife, the partner of his bosom, should have been the main agent in his final immolation, seemed to add an unknown species of sacrilege to all the other horrors of the deed! Roodspere also remembered, with as little satisfaction, the subsequent part taken by the Cardinal in the affair. He had himself described to him the scene he witnessed, with

every circumstance of its horrors; and had reason to conclude, from his expressions of sympathetic indignation, that Wolsey would efficiently carry out his apparent resolution of bringing the accused parties to justice. But he afterwards assented to a compromise, which entirely baffled that object. Wolsey had doubtless strong motives in the course he adopted. A natural *esprit de corps*—the earnest supplications of the clergy, who put every engine in motion to prevent the scandal and detriment to their power inevitable from a solemn adjudication of the case—the proud prelate's wish to thwart the hopes his enemies had conceived of obtaining a complete triumph over him—for the first time — these were incentives to a contrary policy. The obstinate resistance of the accused Treasurer, and the king's awakened resolution, compelled some subterfuge. All that Henry required was an act of submission to his authority, for he was readily brought to believe, what might have been the case, that the persons criminated were the victims of an unfounded popular clamour. Accordingly, the Treasurer being prevailed upon, though with difficulty, to abandon his alleged clerical immunity, and plead not guilty before the royal judges—the lawyers who conducted the case

on behalf of the crown were instructed to admit the plea, and withdraw the indictment. This was done, to the great indignation of the Londoners, with whom Wolsey was already very far from popular, and who ascribed this negation of justice to his influence.

The citizens of London had, in other respects, no great cause to hold the Cardinal in particular esteem in his capacity of prime minister to the imperious Henry. He punished some transgressions into which they had fallen, with extreme severity; and in all his intercourse with them conducted himself with a haughtiness and arbitrary control, which, though enforcing compliance, excited deep and lasting resentment. He helped himself and his master very liberally from their coffers, whenever the capricious policies they pursued had exhausted those of the state. The odium of all fell upon the minister, whose despotic influence was even exaggerated in the popular estimation, and who, it was perceived or imagined, directed the councils of England to views of personal rather than of national advantage. The inspiration of his policy was, in fact, held to be exclusively his own passionate ambition to ascend the chair of St. Peter. Now imperial, now French, it was believed that Wolsey veered

from one to the other of those contending powers, according to the estimate he formed of which seemed likelier to aid him in achieving this crowning object of clerical ambition. At the period we treat of, he had completed the disgust and exasperation of the citizens by forming a new French alliance, which it was thought would eventuate in a war with the Emperor Charles V. He had just returned from a gorgeous embassy to France, during which he was supposed to have secretly arranged some such stipulation—one that could not but be extremely distasteful to the Londoners, who carried on a lucrative trade with the Emperor's vast dominions. More especially, as the provocations to such a course were considered strictly personal to Wolsey, who, after favouring Charles in the colossal enterprises that had ended, not long previously, in the capture of Rome, was alleged to be driven on it purely by anger at the Emperor's refusal to dethrone his captive, Pope Clement VII., and raise himself in his place. The projects of Henry, respecting a divorce from his Queen, Katharine of Aragon, were as yet scarcely suspected by the people—who held her in a love and veneration which would have greatly heightened their aversion to the Cardinal's policy. Anne

Boleyn, though famous in the court for the splendour of her beauty and wit, and the king's marked notice, was as yet unheard of out of it. And certainly, Wolsey, though bent on the divorce, as necessary alike to his vengeance and elevation, never dreamed he was paving the way for such a successor! Nevertheless, the uneasiness of all classes had, of late, been excited, and the first portents of the contest had appeared, in the circulation of a report that it was found advisable to establish the legitimacy of the Princess Mary, by the solemn adjudication of a court which was to examine the validity of her mother's marriage with a prince who was the brother of her first husband, Arthur, Prince of Wales. Some doubts on this point, it was generally known, had been mooted by the French ambassadors, in answer to a proposal to wed the princess to the dauphin. But as yet it was thought, merely with a view to have all cavil on the subject set at rest, preparatory to the alliance.

Roodspere had lost no time on his journey, and he arrived within that assigned in his summons, in what was then the village of Charing Cross. The despotic prelate's love of prompt obedience was well known, and if only suspicions were entertained against him, might

go far to obviate them. He had also resolved to comply with the injunction contained in Secretary Cromwel's missive, and seek an interview with him in the first place. The Reformers had some reason to hope that Cromwel bore a degree of favour to their views, from the audacity he had displayed in his patron's forays on the monastic property. But, at all events, Roodspere deemed it advisable not to neglect any means of illumination on the dangerous and intricate path before him.

The traveller easily recognised Charing Village by the lofty cross that marked the last halting-place of the body of the beloved queen of the first Edward, on its way to final repose in Westminster Abbey. It was an octagonal structure of two stages, raised upon a flight of steps, in the centre of an extensive though scattered group of farm-houses and cottages. It was elaborately fretted with gothic ornaments, and surmounted by a cross, once richly gilded, but then, like a ruined noble, preserving its splendour chiefly in a name. The Golden Cross was still its designation—with little discoverable reason. But the building formed a sort of market-place, where the farmers' wives of the Abbey vassalage assembled to dispose of the lighter products of their

holdings to the good citizens of London, who met them there halfway.

The sight of this memorial of conjugal tenderness—this homage of love to death, and the consecration they had combined to make of their dread junction on earth—affected Roodspere with inexplicable emotion. With all the fervour of his new convictions on dogmatic points, he had never yet ventured to deem that any lawful indulgence in the most beautiful and powerful of human passions remained for him! Love was a forbidden word in the vocabulary of the young and desolate priest. His studious life and strength of moral principle—perhaps, also, the absence of any sufficient stimulus to passions as pure and exalted as they were vehement—had hitherto preserved him from the contagion of the almost universal profligacy with which the clergy belied the professions they were compelled to make. The memory of his mother stood like a warning spectre beside the few temptations that crossed the path of a recluse academic. Nevertheless, the sight of this triumphal monument of a love that died not with its object, and dared thus erect a trophy in the sight of heaven and earth—stirred some deep and innermost feeling in his nature, and struck a more profound sense of desolation

into his heart. He passed on with a sigh that, perhaps, commenced the struggle of his warm and sympathetic heart with the isolating decrees of a church whose bondsman he had become in the ignorance of childhood Then traversing a series of marshy meadows and fields, now forming St. James's Park, he arrived before the battlemented enclosure of York Place.

This was the name by which the future palace of Whitehall was then known, as the residence attached to the archbishopric of York. Known to all England—we might almost say, to all Europe—as the abode of the potent minister whom circumstances and policy had rendered the arbiter of their destinies! York Place was of very considerable extent, the ancient gothic mansion of Hubert de Burgh having received great additions from the Cardinal's architectural taste. At a subsequent period it was found sufficient to lodge the immense retinue of the English kings; but was not then too ample to accommodate that of a subject who had risen from at most the inferior middle classes of the people. A guard of tall yeomen, also destined to be a legacy from an ecclesiastic to the crown of England, kept watch and ward round the precincts of the

palace. But the gates were open to all who chose to enter. Ready attendants took charge of Roodspere's steed—not, perhaps, without some silent wonder at its scraggy appearance, and the travel-stained garb of its owner. On his inquiry for Master Cavendish, gentleman usher of the Cardinal's privy chambers, these also directed him into the great hall, or ante-chamber of the palace, where he was at the time, they said, engaged in the duties of his office.

Much as Roodspere had heard and anticipated of Wolsey's magnificence, he was amazed, on making his way to this apartment, to behold the realization. As was usual in baronial residences, the hall was of great extent, and yet it was crowded with a multitude of persons of all ranks and conditions, awaiting to do homage to the potent master—confounded in the vassalage of interest! It was no wonder, for Wolsey united in his single person all the great offices of state, and dispensed their dignities and rewards at his absolute pleasure. He was in the zenith of his power, blazing unrivalled as the solitary sun, in an apparently cloudless sky of favour and success! A narrow passage, railed in with gilded ropes, and spread with scarlet cloth, up the middle of the hall, marked

the line the Cardinal would traverse through this mob of suitors. Helmets and mitres, plumed and tonsured heads, were indiscriminately mingled in the throngs that pressed along those slight but magic lines of demarcation. Only the favoured individuals admitted to an audience were allowed to pass them. But the great extent of the chamber permitted a free circulation even among these numerous groups; and many diverted the tedium of expectation by walking up and down the hall, engaged in grave or light discourse, according to the mood of mind and business that brought them thither. Others sate apart, on benches placed in the recesses of the lofty windows, anxiously watching the rest, or preserving the dignity of higher rank and station by the seclusion. But the most eager and adventurous portion of the suitors, in a singular variety of costumes, pressed about the doors of a lofty screen that divided off the upper part of the hall. Thence the Cardinal usually made his appearance; and his expectant worshippers strove to establish themselves on points of vantage about it, with all the impatience and rudeness of a modern mob awaiting the opening of some favourite place of entertainment. Even the energetic interference of the ushers

who, armed with long white wands, used them with little respect to persons, to keep order, scarcely effected the purpose.

The proper household of the Cardinal scarcely needed any addition. In all things rivalling, or rather eclipsing, the state of his royal master, he had officers and a retinue of every grade, from a high chamberlain to a yeoman of the pastry. Among his household he also reckoned a number of young men of the highest quality, who were educated under his superintendence, and were proud to swell the glory of his state by personal attendance. In some cases, these noble domestics might be considered as hostages of suspected sires and families. But in the majority of instances they were rather pledges of a servile devotion that sought to flatter the pride of the puissant prelate, at any price. Nevertheless these young nobles were educated with great care, in all the accomplishments befitting their rank and expectations: it could not but be with too deep a tinge of ecclesiastical discipline; too slavish a deference for the person and will of their master. But there were counterbalancing advantages too great to be overlooked by the rapacity and ambition of courtiers. The advantages of free access to the mighty Cardinal's

presence, and consequent opportunities of attracting his notice and favour, gave scope to parental emulation. The enjoyments of a sumptuous home, and an ample share in all the diversions of the court—the large resort of strangers distinguished by any species of merit, and the general kindness and affability of Wolsey's manners, reconciled the young men themselves to their glittering servitude.

Roodspere was not aware that he was addressing one of these high-born domestics in the person of a gentleman, in the Cardinal's livery of scarlet and black, whom he accosted, to learn where Cavendish could be found. He was a young man, gracefully though slenderly made, with a handsome but saturnine visage, nervously working at the lips and nostrils in a manner indicative of an irresolute and melancholy character, not contradicted by the langour and almost gloom remarkable in his large and deeply arched eyes. He was leaning with folded arms against a projection of one of the windows, in so profound a revery that he started when Roodspere spoke to him. But he replied, with great politeness, that Master Cavendish had gone into the palace to announce the arrival of the Lord Treasurer, and that if he pleased to

tarry his return he would point him out to his cognisance.

Roodspere returned his thanks, and had exchanged a few commonplace observations with the stranger, when another made way towards them, who was evidently none with the party he had first addressed. The new comer was a young cavalier, with the face and figure of an Apollo, whose appearance realised the perfection of manly beauty in unison with courtly elegance and grace. The brown hues of his complexion, and his dark flowing hair, were indeed somewhat at variance with this classical ideal. But the brilliant sparkle in his eyes, and the rich colour that flushed his cheeks—evidently with vehemently excited feeling—would not have misbecome the sun-god at the moment when he prepared to pour his avenging arrows of fire on the Grecian camp. His garb exhibited the most elaborate splendour of the times, and far exceeded anything Roodspere had ever yet seen in the way of personal decoration. His breeches, widely stuffed to counterfeit a bulkiness made fashionable by the massive person of Henry VIII., as well as his doublet, were of amber-coloured satin, quilted into a rich and complex pattern with gold thread. His sleeves were of an enormous size,

puffed in half-a-dozen divisions, and, as was also his cloak, were of orange-tawny velvet, embroidered almost to the effacement of the original stuff with gold. His high boots, of white cordovan, broadening about the knees as if intended to hold half-a-dozen limbs of the calibre of those inserted, were like vases of nosegays, so overflowing were they with curled ribands of every hue and colour. A little cap, of the brightest ruby velvet, set with an aigrette of peacocks' feathers, shone like the gem itself, by force of its rich hue, on his head. A laced handkerchief, doubtless some lady's favour, was fastened with an air of defiance to the pommel of his ornamented sword, as if to provoke the envy and challenge of his rivals. On the whole it would scarcely have been possible, even in that magnificent court, to have produced a more glorious-looking cavalier. But with all these florid externals it did not appear that the courtly Apollo himself was in very festive humour. His first greeting to the noble servitor with whom Roodspere had spoken, expressed as much. "So, my Lord Percy! I have buffeted my way to you at last. Why stand you here moping like an owl in the broad daylight? I bring you a message that brooks no more delay between pouring

and quaffing than the whizzing wines of Champagne! Nay, not a joyous one, unless you take it so, for acceptance makes the value of the gift!"

"What canst thou bring me, dear George Boleyn, from whence thou comest, doubtless, but what is of most joyful significance to me?" returned the saturnine cavalier, with a sudden beaming of animated expectation in all his features.

"Why then, hearken! It hath come to this at last—that the lady you wot of is resolved to declare open war with her adversary. And they who are not with her, she swears, shall henceforth be held to be against her!" said the handsome cavalier, addressed as George Boleyn. The Lord Percy—as it appeared the other was styled—grew pale as death as these words were uttered, and stared with aghast attention as the envoy continued. "Yea, she commands that all who pretend to be her servants and lovers, of whatsoever degree, as they would escape her everlasting resentment and displeasure, on the first public occasion that offers itself, shall appear before all the world wearing a marigold flower on some conspicuous garniture—which henceforth she adopts as her cognisance and badge!"

"A marigold flower! Wherefore would my lady wear a yellow flower? Yellow is for jealousy," replied Lord Percy, with visible dismay and surprise.

"Wherefore? Do you alone of all the court know not the wherefore?" returned Boleyn, with passionate vehemence. "Methought it would have been the prime jest among you of the Cardinal's vassalage here, my Lord Percy! Heard ye not how yesterday, in the Antioch chamber, before the Queen and all the court, saving his Grace, the Cardinal flouted my sister—likening her to the marigold, that spreads its gaudy leaves so broadly and boldly to the sun, as if to rival as well as woo its beams'—these were his words—'that anon it sickens and withers in the noontide glow, and at night is but a feast for snails and caterpillars!'"

"I heard, indeed, that his grace likened Mistress Anne to the marigold, but methought it was but in the matter of her complexion, which indeed resembles the golden brown of a field of ripe corn, with the poppy deep down in the glow for the rich hues on her cheeks!" said Percy, with visible agitation.

"Nay, my lord, it was full well seen of all who were present, that the Cardinal would

have it thought my sister woos her own dishonour with the king! The queen herself seemed to assent therein by a wintry smile she gave, while all the women, who hate my bright sister for eclipsing them into unnoticed darkness, laughed like a clutter of sparrows flying at some glorious jay of the woods that should sally forth in all its spangled bravery!" returned George Boleyn.

"Quoth my lord so?— O George! and, truly, is it not strange that ever since her arrival in the court she has been so sharp a pesterer of his grace, on whom I must depend wholly for freedom ever to be hers?—While with the king, whose favour for her to win is the very death of my hopes!—with the king, in very sooth, George, she is too lavish of her company and witcheries if, as she would have me think, she means me well!" said the Lord Percy, with a vehemence of emotion that vanquished for the moment his habitual timorousness and caution.

"You have it in your own power, had ye the will, to cure yourself of all fears on that score, Lord Percy!" replied Boleyn, with equal warmth. "But well thou wottest, Henry, that her sole purpose in seeking the king's notice and favour is to win some

powerful protection against the Cardinal's malign aspect towards your plighted loves! The rest is nought but false leasings and inventions of my bitter wife and her comates, whose evil tongues, finding only charms and perfections in my sister, do turn them also against her! Believe me—unless the Italian's proverb stand, that a million lies make a truth—there is no more in their report than of light in the pit of hell! The king loves music, and mirth and minstrelsy—and of all my sister is so sovereign a mistress that 'tis no marvel he delights in her society—having also but so sad a consort to amuse his leisure! But for Anne Boleyn to curry favour with the Cardinal, it is not possible! She cannot abide his puffed pride and insolence—which, God he knows, how others endure is more than an infinite marvel! And knowing, as she doth, how he hath betrothed you to the Lady Mary Talbot so rivetedly, it would seem, by his high and mighty will and pleasure therein, that you dare not even clank the chain lest you should ascertain it is not so fixed to the dungeon staple as married men find theirs!"

"I have hopes, if she would but give me time, and second me by a humility and compliance with my lord's humours! But well

all men know he will endure no emulation in his highness's favour, from any of whatsoever degree or sex, much less one of the Norfolk blood!" replied Percy. "If she would but imitate your pliant father, George! all would go well anon."

"Why, what hath he gained by keeping ever a willowy back to the wind?" said young Boleyn, scorn dilating all his handsome features. "He has served your lord till it seems he is past service—or else it is for his daughter's sake the Cardinal deems so, who hath advised him frankly to go to his sheep-shearing in Kent! Yet, by the passion of our Lord! were not your Cardinal the most jealous dotard in christendom, he would heed my sister's quips and cranks no more than the lordly bull the fluttering of a butterfly over his pastures, when, belike, he raises his head, stares for an instant, and then grazes on! But were I like thee, so great an earl's heir, I would set as little store by a proud priest's yea or nay as any of your ancestors of a Scottish king's, when he would ride beyond the border!"

"How can he sail whose ship yet grows in the forest? Or who hath his hunger sated with the expectancy of a feast?" returned

Percy, adding with a start, for his eye at that moment encountered Roodspere's; "but, hush! here is one too nigh at hand, who may overhear what is said, when there is an end, indeed, to all hope!"

"Nay, my Lord Percy, for I have purposed all along that he should! It is an open war, I tell you, now! and methinks a beggarly clerk's robe assures us of a certain espial to his grace!" said George Boleyn, in a high and haughty tone, and looking at Roodspere with an expression of defiance and contempt. Percy also gazed at him, but with a very different one, of alarm and almost of supplication in his eye.

"Nay, sirs, ye need dread none espial in me—I have more reason to fear such on my own behalf," replied Roodspere, without appearing to notice either demonstration. "I have heard as little of your discourse as I could hinder myself, being firmly wedged into this niche, and, as I thought, in too public a presence to run risk of overhearing secrets. But, be it as it may, I shall report none. I am a poor scholar of Cambridge who have no concern nor understanding in court matters, nor desire any."

"For my part, thou hast good leave to

report all thou hast heard; I will deny nothing I have said. I trust it is not treason yet to wear a lady's favour, and be proud of it—as I will, anon, in every presence, wear the marigold!" said Boleyn, with impetuosity; but continuing, in a tone in which it was difficult to say whether jest or earnest predominated, "So, you are of Cambridge, master scholar? I trust then you are not tainted with learned Bilney's plague, and come among us to be medicined with fire?"

Roodspere was rather surprised at the tone of this remark, and still more at the eager and inquiring gaze fixed upon him by the handsome cavalier, which seemed to seek some signs of mystic recognition, such as the ancient adepts might have exchanged, in his countenance.

"If I had caught Bilney's malady, mayhap his remedies might yet not serve to my cure!" he replied, with a significance not lost upon either of the previous interlocutors.

"Why then, if you are one of Bilney's men, are you summoned before the Legate's Court, to be purged of your iniquity?" said Percy, shrinking back as if from the approach of a literal contagion.

"I am a friend of Bilney's. I have been

his pupil in the Greek and Hebrew, but what mine iniquity therein may be, I am yet to learn," replied Roodspere; but still rather addressing himself to the young lord's companion.

"Why, then, if your leisure should serve for such a purpose, I would fain learn from you what it is that Bilney hath said and done to put our black cattle in such a turmoil, as if a hornet were in all their tails!" said George Boleyn. "I should be glad to see you, master scholar, in a poor house, which an angry goodwife I have sometimes permits me to call mine own, in the Strand."

"I know not what liberty of acceptance may remain to me! Whether the Cardinal—whether I have not in somewise have offended so as to make my visitation the less to be desired, sir!" said Roodspere, somewhat confusedly.

"Oh, the master of my house doth not ask the legatine court's pleasure as to who shall be welcome therein! But, perhaps, you are in danger of seeing the inside of the Lollard's Tower at Paul's, or of the Gatehouse of Westminster, first?" replied Boleyn, carelessly in tone, but emphatically in look.

"Tut, George! his business is with the gentleman of the privy chambers, and lo ye where

he comes! This is Master Cavendish, sir!" interrupted Lord Percy, with manifest uneasiness.

"But he hath other business, meseems, at this moment! Oh, by St. Venus, he is hastening him to meet a flutter of nuns at the gate—who have affairs, doubtless, with the Legate's Court!" said George Boleyn; and indeed, as he spoke, the historical official mentioned bustled so hastily past along the reserved way, that Lord Percy failed in an effort to attract his attention. And veritably Cavendish's object appeared to be to receive a rather numerous procession of nuns, in the black and white Benedictine robes, and closely veiled, who now made their appearance within the great folding doors of the hall. With a deference paid either to their sex or to some occult protection, Master Cavendish admitted them also into the pale kept for the Cardinal's passage, and returned, ceremoniously escorting the group along the line. They passed Roodspere and the cavaliers with whom he was in confabulation, who had thus an opportunity of observing that it consisted of about a dozen cloisteresses, headed by a lady of a tall and portly figure, who seemed to be the superioress, and was probably abbess or

prioress of some wealthy community, by the respectful style of her reception, and the general appearance of herself and retinue. Indeed, she had adopted in her array all the luxury and ornament in any manner consistent with conventual costume. Her robes were, it is true, of black stuff, but were of the finest woof, and her under vestment, wimple, and veil, were of the richest silver lace instead of plain linen. She wore a rosary of goldsmith's work, at her girdle, of which a queen might have been proud, and carried a crosier of wrought silver with as much stateliness as if it had been a sceptre.

The rest of the nuns wore the sombre habit of their order, also in extremely fine materials, and very possibly of their own manufacture. But among them was the figure of what appeared to be a young girl about seventeen, who being dressed altogether in white, was evidently a novice not yet professed, or only so far as enabled her to assume the first, or white veil, of probation. The slender beauty and grace of the form that appeared in this snowy costume, like a lily amid the dark reeds and bulrushes of a standing pool, attracted general observation—and especially that of the three young men who were watch-

ing the advance of the group. And some likelihood seemed offered of a more distinct survey, for at a little distance farther on, Cavendish invited the nuns to enter one of the numerous arched window bays in the hall, set like the cells of a honeycomb along the walls. These formed convenient waiting-rooms, only allowed to favoured individuals, being separated by gilded railings from the pressure and movement in the main approach, The one in which the nuns were now ushered was nearly opposite to Roodspere's station.

"Marry, what goodly magpie sisterhood is this? Canst thou tell us, Percy, who art first page of the body to his all-but holiness the Legate?" said George Boleyn, after a brief scrutiny of the train.

"It is Dame Juliana Brocas, the Prioress of Clerkenwell," replied Percy. "Of that I am as well assured as a man can be of a veiled visage, for 'tis not her first visit hither. Yet she cleared herself passing well heretofore. What can be her summons here to-day?"

"I will tell you, Harry Lackadaisy, as one who should know, being so bosomed in the abbey secrets as I am, whereof Clerkenwell nunnery is a suffragan priory!" said the voice of a fourth speaker, who now joined the three

previous interlocutors. He was about their own age, of a stalwart person and commanding features, and evidently of distinction, but with a haggard and dissolute expression, doubtless achieved in a long course of licentious indulgence. These traits were not unsuited to the style of his costume, which was of soiled and tarnished stuffs, yet had been originally of the richest materials, and profusely ornamented with jewels and embroidery. But only traces where these had been plucked off remained to testify their former presence. Altogether the new arrivant had the air of some desperate adventurer, whom a career of profligacy and extravagance had reduced from a proud station to one of almost abject destitution and recklessness.

"Well, what brings my lady prioress among us to day, Bigod?" said George Boleyn, adding with a satirical smile, "It may be infinitely to the bettering of thy fortunes if she be the lady of whom we have heard in the court, in whose service (clambering the ivy on the nunnery walls!) a knight of St. John broke his neck of late. Thou hast but to muster some of the looks with which ye won the French ladies at the Field of the Cloth-of

Gold, where I have heard you say you carried two of your best manors on your back."

"Curses on the Field of the Cloth-of-Gold! —and on the Jew villains that lent me the money to make a gorgeous fool of myself there with the rest, and would now squeeze the marrow out of my bones to pay their usuries!" returned the person addressed by the name of Bigod, with something of fury in his tones.

"Why dost thou not rather curse the haught upstart, to swell whose peacock pride —" began Boleyn, when Percy interrupted him with alarmed precipitation. "George, art thou mad? The Cardinal owes my Lord Bigod thanks for his duteous service there, and will doubtless make him his losses good some day."

"Dost thou think, dear lad, he will ever give me the lieutenancy of Calais, for which I besiege him day and night?" said Lord Bigod, for such it seemed was his title, who was, doubtless, one of those nobles whom the ostentation or policy of Wolsey had led into extravagances, in the famous interview between Henry VIII. and Francis I., which for ever afterwards crippled their means, and reduced them to his dependence.

"Ay! when his grace no longer finds the revenues of Calais of use in his own treasury;

and if thou canst unmake thyself, and cease to be thy mutinous brother of the Abbey's brother," said George Boleyn, with a derisive laugh.

"I would I could, so that the dead halt were made by him," returned the affectionate relative.

"Nay, man alive! It were enough if thou couldst win thy saintly brother to a submission," remonstrated Percy.

"It is impossible; he will listen to no reason," said Lord Bigod, with angry vehemence.

"What concern have reason and thou together, that thou shouldst urge aught in her behalf with thy brother, Prior Sancgraal?" said Boleyn, smiling.

"This much—that the Cardinal doth all but promise me the lieutenancy of Calais, if I can win the peevish fellow to a submission. And what can be more unreasonable than for a man who hath resigned his birthright, and all other his possessions, in favour of a younger brother, to scruple to grant him a little favour, which would yet crown all the rest at last? Is he not a saint, and is not his profession, moreover, humility and self-denial? But his eyes flamed like a demon's, when I but proposed the thing. He called me a worser Cain, who

would destroy his brother's soul! All but spurned me out of his cell, and bidding me go like the reptile I was, and lick the dust of the feet of him who had crushed me into it, said that the janitors should have orders not to admit me again into the Abbey, and so wished me an eternal God speed to the devil! I was so vexed when I came out—so adry with rage —that I ran like a mad dog into the Sanctuary, to St. Julian's, swallowed a bucket of some kind of wash, and lost the ducats you lent me, George, at tables with a big, swearing deserter of the wars, who vowed to all the fiends he had parted with his inheritance, as I had done, to swell the Cardinal's pomp, in the fields between Ardres and Guines."

"What quarrel hath the Cardinal with Prior Sancgraal?" said George Boleyn. "Is it the old matter about the suppressed monksties?"

"All manner of matters! But what lacks this whey-faced clerk, who stands gaping at us so earnestly?" said Lord Bigod, observing Roodspere for the first time.

"I was awaiting, sir—if you speak of me—to learn for what cause these ladies of Clerkenwell attend the legate's court?" returned Roodspere, overlooking the insulting tone of the

speech, in an apparently very anxious desire for the information thus solicited.

"St. Venus! they have thrown back their veils! And, good troth, yonder novice is as sweet a blushet as ever mine eyes alighted on!" exclaimed Boleyn, with sudden vivacity. The two young lords and himself then first noticed a spectacle which had been for some time riveting Roodspere's attention.

The nuns had been comfortably ensconced by Cavendish's care in one of the recesses mentioned above, where the prioress and some of her attendants were furnished with seats. The novice reverently took a station behind the chair of her superior, and for several minutes all was silence and timid observation among the recluse bevy thus suddenly brought into the full glare of the world. But by and by they began to exchange remarks; a buzz of conversational whispers arose like the murmur of bees in a hive, and once or twice the light flutter of a laugh was audible among the gentle group. Then, as it seemed, finding their veils too close in the crowded atmosphere of the hall, the prioress gave a general permission, perhaps command, to remove them. Herself authorised the exposition by example, and throwing back her veil revealed the plump

high-coloured visage of a handsome woman of middle age, who was certainly by no means ignorant of her own advantages. The glance of a pair of sufficiently bright but bold and roving eyes, after wandering for a period among the crowded assemblage, singled Roodspere out, and for some reason or another continually reverted to him. But he speedily forgot to take any notice of the circumstance. His gaze and indeed his entire faculties became absorbed in another contemplation.

With the implicit obedience of the cloister, the nuns imitated the action of their superior. The young novice also; and Roodspere's attention, already attracted towards her by a vague sentiment of compassion, was at once riveted by the exquisite and touching character of the beauty thus displayed, with all the unconsciousness of virgin modesty.

Never before had the young reformer's gaze lighted on so fair an apparition of female loveliness, even in those dreams which visited his youthful slumbers, and haunted him wakingly, in spite of his conviction of the superstitious nature of his thraldom, with associations of remorse and dread. A girl in the earliest years of womanhood was before him, shining like a sun-clad seraph, in the vivid illumination

of the vast window—the exquisite outline of whose features was matched by the lovely bloom of a complexion which, in delicacy and warmth of colour, resembled a lily fraught with the rosy glow of a summer sunset. An incarnate lily, indeed, she seemed in her virgin modesty and sweetness, bending with cloistral humility and bashfulness over the prioress's chair, in her snowy robes! By a trick of the same natural association, the clustering ringlets of her light golden hair seemed like the curling of the honeysuckle on its scented tendrils round her blush-rose visage. But it was not merely the beauty of the young novice that fascinated Roodspere's gaze—nor even the divine light of purity and youth that environed her with a kind of lustrous halo. It seemed to him that there was something familiar and yet unknown to him in the features of her face—as if he had seen it in some previous state of existence, in some platonic world of the past! Full of this puzzling thought, he gazed so earnestly on the youthful novice, that her eyes were compelled, by the strange fascination exercised with those wonderful orbs, to encounter his. The glance from the clear blue liquid depths thus disturbed still more startled Roodspere, and though he perceived that the novice's

lovely colour deepened to the glow of a carnation with modest surprise, and that her gaze sunk from his, and arose not again, he could not withdraw his observation until Bigod's exclamation broke the spell.

Nevertheless, the baronial spendthrift, in a few words, explained the mystery.

"By St. Botolph of Bigod!" he vociferated almost loud enough to be heard on the opposite side of the chamber by the nuns themselves, "this must be stout old Sir Amias Paulet's orphan heiress, about whom the chief wrangle now is between my brother and the Cardinal's court, and concerning whom my lady prioress of Clerkenwell is doubtless in question to-day! Sancgraal and his nuns have bewitched her into the notion that she can only save her soul by becoming one of them, and the Cardinal is mad to see a wealthy ward of his court of chancery snatched out of his hand and gift under such crafty religious shows, that he cannot very churchmanly gainsay it."

Roodspere then comprehended, with a sudden rush of emotions to his heart, that it was a daughter's resemblance to the doughty lord of Hinton St. George, whom he scarcely knew whether to remember as a persecutor or a protector, which had thus caught and per-

plexed his attention. He recollected immediately that Sir Amias had an only child, and that it was supposed to add to the asperity of his temper that it was a female one. But the young heiress was still an infant when her sire's misfortunes compelled him to reside at a distance from his estates. It now appeared that he was dead, and had left this orphan to the contention of those whom in his life he had most hated and despised. O death! indeed but thou art powerless!

CHAPTER VII.

CARDINAL WOLSEY.

He was a man
Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking
Himself with princes; one, that by suggestion,
Ty'd all the kingdom. Simony was fair play;
His own opinion was his law——
Of his own body he was ill, and gave
The clergy ill example.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE longer Roodspere gazed on the novice's sweet visage, the more clearly did he recognise the noble Paulet features, softened and, as it were, spiritualised, into a peculiar kind of beauty which suggested the thought to him that, if the great races of men had indeed their planetary angels, the orphan inheritrix of the proud name of the lords of Hinton might well be taken for that of her own departing lineage. A thousand associations of his own sorrowful childhood returned with the mere sound of that name; but now, by some strange magic, they seemed divested of their

saddest hues, like dark clouds that silver in all their skirts as they pass the moon. What new light was this in Roodspere's soul that shed so balmy an effulgence on those painful and thronging recollections of the past?

The eyes of the youthful novice meanwhile never reverted to Roodspere's fixed and fascinated gaze. She stood patiently as a wingless seraph behind the prioress's chair, her long eyelashes pencilling her fair cheek, and shadowing their blue and humid depths like the golden reeds skirting a translucent lake. Yet the electricity of the glance she had encountered spent not all its force in that brief concussion. A glow of fire lingered on the novice's cheek, her lips quivered, and Roodspere *felt* that she was aware he still gazed on! And gaze on he did, in spite of extreme dread that he might offend—the certainty that he was adding to her timidity and embarrassment; in spite of a secret consciousness that he was accumulating materials for anguish and regret in his own heart. His whole frame seemed gradually to awaken to a new and marvellous vitality. A sensation more overpoweringly delicious than any he had ever yet experienced glided through all his veins—into his very marrow—with the subtle thrill of the

element to which the imagination of lovers has so often likened their delusive bliss! Yet was this rich emotion fraught with almost as intense a sentiment of sorrow and hopelessness. It was like a glimpse into Eden caught by a condemned spirit through the eternal bars! A vague apprehension haunted him even as he gazed, resembling that of the storm-environed traveller contemplating a rainbow, whose aërial tints he fears will melt into their native heaven ere he can fix their lovely hues in his vision—and so leave him to a deeper desolation and despair.

While thus absorbed, Roodspere's ideas were, nevertheless, painfully distracted by the conversation the young nobles with whom he had spoken continued among themselves. The licentious Bigod broadly avowed that he was laying himself out to catch the attention of the prioress, who, it seemed, enjoyed a reputation not altogether discouraging to such impertinence. The church had ruined him, he said with his reckless audacity, and it was but meet that she should now lend some succour to his grievous necessities! On the other hand, George Boleyn, with a more poetical appreciation, ran wild in his expressions of admiration of the young novice, and vivaciously, though

certainly with no lack of serious goodwill to the task, discussed the possible means of carrying off so sweet a prize from the same much-abused personification. "For I'll be sworn," Roodspere was shocked to hear him say, "that the church — which means the Cardinal—who hath still his colt's tooth in his head, will not see her without having his lips set watering! Yet for the monks to win her from him, and shut her up in four walls, as if the Lord were a Babylonish soldan who would keep his lemans safe, it were a full foul shame to all christian chivalry!"

Percy endeavoured, but with little success, to change the current of this wild discourse. "Talk you thus," George," he exclaimed, "when you have scarcely been my Lady Wingfield's sworn servant a month's space, counted by the swiftest almanac of lovers' sighs?"

"Long enough for any folly to last!" returned the gay cavalier. "But for the blustering threats of her foolish husband, I could be nigh tempted to cast this embroidered kerchief she guerdoned me withal, to the winds, and take up with pure maiden white for awhile! Thy colours will be piebald, Bigod; mine shall be the vestal snow!"

"They were soon soiled with such wearing!" said Roodspere, with a sudden ebullition of indignant feeling. He was too little accustomed to the manners of the profligate courts of the age to be aware how much of this confabulation was to be taken for persiflage, and the light current vein of courtly raillery.

"In very sooth, master scholar, my ladies are not long unkind: I would they were, for the chief pleasure of the lovechase, methinks, lies in the pursuit," returned Boleyn, a disdainful smile at this clerical reproof overspreading his superbly handsome face. "But go to, man! why art thou angry? Thou hast scant hope, methinks, to come between the lion and the jackal for the prey, that thou shouldst rebuke the subtle leopard for creeping through the bushes on it, if he may! Yet, by Dian's curd-white visage, my lady prioress beckons to you! How! are ye old acquaintances? List, list how she sings to you with her eyes," he concluded, in a melodious undersong—

"Kiss me for old acquaintance sake;
Sweetheart, that once wert mine!"

Roodspere, indeed, now observed that Dame Juliana made him an emphatic signal to cross

to the recess, where she sate in state. Whether she mistook the object of his sedulous observation, the novice being posted immediately behind her chair, or had some particular reason for the summons, he did not pause to reflect. Without, indeed, a moment's hesitation, he ventured to raise the rope fencing the reserved way, and traversed the intervening space, luckily without exciting the animadversion of the white-wanded officials who preserved decorum in the assemblage. The prioress's proceedings, however, seemed not altogether to meet the approbation of her own retinue. It was pretty obvious that one of the nuns made some remonstrance. This was a severe, formal-looking woman, whose meridian of ill-favouredness—for beauty she could never have possessed any—was long passed. A narrow-minded and malignant expression pervaded her pinched and withered features, while the short bluish hairs that decked her upper lip, and her mottled complexion, gave her a haggish and witch-like look very much in consonance with the name it appeared she had adopted as her conventual one. "Sister Barbara! you are to remember that I, and not you, am prioress of the poor foundation of our Lady of the Assumption, of

Clerkenwell, and, though unworthy, am thereby the fittest to regulate the conduct to be observed of all under its rule and governance, mine own surely in especial included!" the prioress was saying, in raised and angry tones, as Roodspere arrived. Sister Barbara turned with a vexed look, and whispered something to the novice, who immediately began to tell her beads with an air of implicit submission and devotion.

The excitement of the rebuke she had found it necessary to administer—or some other reason—heightened the prioress's complexion to the crimson hues of the peony when Roodspere reached her presence. She hastened to explain the reason of the summons she had ventured, she modestly observed, to give him—and they proved very fitting ones. She said that, perceiving his clerical garb, she had ventured to solicit his countenance and protection towards some poor religious women unaccustomed to the world—very bats in the daylight—who had been compelled to quit the shadows of their cloister, unwillingly, in obedience to the superiors God had placed over them, and make their appearance in that unfit locality. With, perhaps, some secret purpose of ascertaining who he was, the prioress then skil-

fully added a request, *if* he was of the cardinal's retinue, that he would kindly hasten Master Cavendish's return with tidings of when they might expect to be admitted to his grace's gracious presence—whither they were summoned, Dame Juliana added with no feigned expression of dismay, on a very troublesome business, the issue of which was extremely doubtful, and full of harassment.

Roodspere expressed his sympathy with this latter announcement, and the pleasure he should have experienced in being of any service to so honourable a lady and her community. But he confessed that he himself was only a poor Cambridge scholar, who had also business with the legate's court, which he might possibly find equally vexatious. Meanwhile, he respectfully intreated to know what the occasion of their presence and annoyance might be, as he was possessed of some skill in the canon law, and might, perhaps, offer some suggestion worthy of notice on any point in debate. This was enough; the prioress replied with a whole torrent of information. "Alack, alack! we are fallen into my lord legate's displeasure, gentle master, on account of our young novice here, Lily-Virgin, who hath hidden herself, after her simple wont, behind me,

for I see her not," she replied. "Master clerk, she hath a call to a devote and singular life in our poor nunnery of St. Mary—which the cardinal's grace will by no means be brought to allow. And so we are all called into question and trouble on her account, as if we should have used unlawful arts and devices to win her to her said holy and religious purpose!"

Roodspere's reply was of an unexpected nature. His aversion to monasticism, in all its forms, would at any time have rendered the spectacle of an intended sacrifice of the kind distasteful to him. But it was peculiarly so in this instance.

"Why, in truth, reverend lady," he replied, with emotion, "in very truth, is not this youthful maiden too young, and ignorant of her own inclinings, and of the world she relinquishes, to be able to form as yet a ripe and fitting judgment on so important a decision, that consigns an entire existence to solitude and useless abnegation? As if God made his loveliest creations—the flower and essences of humanity—to be immured from the light—to wither in unseen neglect—their beauty and fragrance wasted on dull cold cloister walls!—perchance to be profaned to unhallowed uses,

even as magicians and sorcerers work their spells with holy and else sanative herbs?"

The novice raised her eyes, floating in a golden humidity of unshed tears, with an expression of astonishment. Sister Barbara looked at the prioress with one of silent but severe reproof. But Dame Juliana herself seemed rather pleased and flattered than otherwise. "You are right, master clerk!" she observed. "I was myself much too young when I took upon me the obligations of our holy order, awhile agone! and so I often tell our Lily of the Virgin, and do exhort her in all things to be conformable to the will of our most excellent lord and vicar of Christ's vicar, the cardinal!"

"Methought the sweet lady's name was Mary? The Lady Mary, I do remember me, we of her father's vassalage were wont to call our infant heiress at Hinton St. George!" said Roodspere.

The young novice started, and looked at Roodspere with a sudden and vividly excited interest. These names, it was evident, exercised also upon her the spell of old association. And a word, a sound, in the most remote and dissevered scenes will, indeed, at times strike upon the chords of the heart like the key-note

of some forgotten strain which revives the whole harmony. In very sweet, though low and tremulous tones, the novice observed, "Methought, indeed, master clerk, I had seen you ere now—may it be that you are he that was a little lad at my father's warren-lodge, who had the tame deer which he found a wounded fawn beside its dead dam in the forest?"

It was even so: and to the astonishment, and possibly the chagrin, of the high dame who had been the unconscious instrument in bringing about this reunion, the youthful Lady of Hinton and her vassal's grandson fell as naturally as might be into an interchange of reminiscences connected with a period when one was a mere infant and the other but a child of maturer years, yet which both seemed distinctly to recal in the minutest particulars. Remembering the favour in which his grandsire was held by Sir Amias Paulet, and the latter's frequent visits to his gamekeeper's lodge, Roodspere himself was not surprised to find the youthful lady was familiar with his name, and even preserved so distinct a recollection of the branded and fearstruck rustic, who had scarcely ever dared to raise his eyes in presence of his severe lord! Sister Barbara wearied much sooner than the young natives

of Hinton St. George of this harmless exchange of recognition. "Daughter Lily!" she interrupted, with sudden asperity, "for she hath bidden adieu, sir, to this worldly though most blessed name of Mary with which you salute her—daughter Lily-Virgin! you should not need now to be taught that the young betrothed of our Lord are not to speak thus freely with every stranger and wayfarer who may enter into discourse with them!—More especially being where we are, and having good cause to misdoubt of evil in the fairest shows that may be offered to us here!"

"Peace, sister!—you talk most unadvisedly—but I am allowed no good rule in my community, and bear only the penalties of misdemeanour—Lo ye, here comes Master Cavendish!" said the prioress, very pettishly; so that it was perhaps fortunate—though Roodspere did not think so—that the gentleman-usher, so designated, arrived on the scene of action at this moment.

At the approach of the functionary, Roodspere remarked that the prioress—whose eyes had nearly all the time dwelt upon himself with a steadiness that greatly embarrassed him—cast down her eyelids with an almost ludicrous expression of modest humility and

unconnection with what was passing in the bustling scene around. But Cavendish was too much absorbed in his own flourishing cogitations to notice that his arrival was not a subject of universal satisfaction.

"Forsooth, my Lady of Clerkenwell," he said, with an air of infinite felicitation, "rather than to cherish apprehensions of his grace's displeasure, you should assure yourself of standing better in his good favour than the most potent peers and nobles in all this glorious realm! My lord will speak with you as soon as he has dismissed the Bishop of Lincoln, the king's highness's confessor, who is with him on a special business of the state that brooks of no delay. Meanwhile, I am to escort you to the privy chambers, where such preparation of banquet, music, and other festivity is made for you as might content his royal majesty's own visitation! And, moreover, his grace gives no other audience this day—and purposes not to quit his palace, but to yield him wholly to mirth and solace as with very pleasing and honoured guests. The high chamberlain, Sir Harry Guildford, hath it in charge to deliver so much to this worshipful attendance—among whom, as ye may well espy, are my Lords of Norfolk and Suf-

folk, and the Abbot of Lichfield, in full pontificals, fuming like the grains of a brewage for an audience, and shall get none!—And who are you, fair sir, who gaze at me thus earnestly?"

Much surprised with what he heard, Roodspere nevertheless replied, without hesitation, that he had received instructions to attend upon Master Secretary Cromwel at that hour, and desired to know whether his honour was at liberty to receive a stranger? The gentleman-usher elevated his eyebrows, and looked at the querent with very considerable doubt and interrogatory. Roodspere's shabby scholar's garb, much travel-stained and disordered, struck on his courtly observation with, it was obvious, no very favourable effect. But a recollection seemed suddenly to strike him. "Forsooth, if it be so that you are of Cambridge, and your name Roodspere, Master Secretary has given me a strict command concerning you, and will most gladly welcome you! Follow with my ladies of Clerkenwell, and I will take you where you may abide his leisure."

"So, Master Cavendish! what ails my lord cardinal, that we shall not even have the division of a frowning glance among us to-day?" interposed a voice; and to Roodspere's great

vexation, the speaker, George Boleyn, and the Lord Bigod crossed to where he stood.

"His grace expressly commanded no other reason should be assigned, save his good pleasure, sir," replied the gentleman-usher, with a dry hauteur which evinced that he shared his master's dislikes as well as his predilections. "Madame prioress, will you walk?"

"If my arm might be of any stay, reverend lady prioress," began the audacious Bigod, pushing forward to that dignified personage, who, as well as her nuns, had now arisen, in compliance with Cavendish's notification.

"Or mine, to this youthful demoiselle, who seems to lack some assistance?" said Boleyn.

"Peace, sirs!—these ladies are invited whither none come without his grace's especial summons!" said Cavendish, with lofty stateliness. "Follow on, master scholar, and I trust my lady prioress will find me a stout enough prop for the nonce!"

Roodspere joyfully offered his arm to the novice, while Dame Juliana found it impossible to decline the proffered attention of the gentleman-usher, who then solemnly led the way along the reserved passage. George Boleyn and his companion were left, with little

ceremony of adieu, to digest as they best might the mortifying circumstances of their rebuff.

"Whew!" whistled the former cavalier, after a pause, and bursting into a laugh—but not of satisfaction. "The priest takes both bite and sup as usual! Let us go and see how my sallow kinsman of Norfolk relishes cooling his heels so long in vain!"

"I will be seen in no such company," replied Lord Bigod. "Blessed Botolph! deem you I said aught in his hearing which the roguish clerk can repeat to my disadvantage?"

"Infinite matter; and to mine—but I care not," returned Boleyn, with a gesture of vehement defiance.

"If he doth, by God's wounds! I will cut his ears from his head, though I be thereby compelled to eat the Abbey scraps in the Sanctuary for the rest of my days!" said the baronial prodigal, concluding with another still more fearful oath.

The Cardinal's court, as it might well be called, was now fast breaking up; but envious and inquiring looks followed the favoured procession of which Roodspere made one. When, at length, it reached the screen, and Cavendish, unlocking a door in it with a key which hung at his girdle, admitted the

whole train, had the crowds in the hall seen a select group let into paradise, they could scarcely have stared more grudgingly after them!

The screen admitted to a staircase so broad that a score of persons might have ascended it abreast without ruffling each other's purfled pomp. This terminated in a guard chamber, tenanted by a body of gentlemen-at-arms, whose special business it was to watch over the safety of the cardinal's person. They passed unquestioned through these guardsmen, to whom Cavendish was, of course, familiarly known, and who were besides busily engaged in throwing dice. Thence they entered a gallery of extraordinary length and spaciousness, hung with rich silken tapestry. Cavendish paused about the middle of this apartment, and politely addressing Roodspere, requested him to remain in the gallery until he could send Master Cromwel; and this he promised to do as soon as he had escorted the ladies of Clerkenwell to the apartments provided for their reception.

Roodspere felt that it was impossible to offer any objection to so reasonable a procedure. Nevertheless, he felt an infinitude. He had not spoken a word to the novice in

their hurried transit, yet it seemed as if millions of thoughts had crowded for utterance to his lips! A silent acquiescence was all he could command; but Dame Juliana luckily filled up the pause by the expression of a courteous hope that the learned Cambridge doctor, as she now understood him to be, would visit her at his earliest leisure, in Clerkenwell, and help her to set her mind at rest on the point, whether she might lawfully withstand her novice's earnest desire to dedicate herself to the service of our Lady. Roodspere liked neither the look nor manner that accompanied this invitation, yet he eagerly, almost passionately, promised compliance. The fair novice blushed, wherefore she herself would have been altogether incapable of elucidating, while her whole sweet visage brightened like the flower, her prototype, in a sudden beam of the sun. Little other ceremony of leave-taking ensued, and Cavendish, escorting the nuns through a portal which gave a momentary glimpse into a stately corridor, Roodspere was left alone, and never before had he felt so emphatically the meaning of that dreary word! It seemed as if some delicious strain of music had suddenly ceased, some beautiful light become extinguished on his path, some

sweetest essence lost its dewy fragrance in the air! He was left alone to sorrowful recollections and uneasy apprehensions, to doubt and despondent certainties, oppressed rather than aroused to curious notice by the deserted grandeur of the scene in which he remained. In these brief moments he appeared to his own consciousness to have lived years—to have exhausted life — to have drained its sweetest draught to the dregs, and to have henceforth only bitterness and regret for his vanished good remaining! Yet even this new and vehement sentiment was linked to an association which recalled Roodspere to the consideration of his proper business and condition. Mary Paulet was led before the Legate—and was it a relenting father or a stern judge whom he was himself to face in the same personage? The chief of the tyrannous orthodoxy he had renounced, or the daring and successful innovator destined to pioneer the advance of a glorious reformation? But while thus musing and endeavouring to place himself and his mighty kinsman in some distinct relative light, Roodspere recalled, with a sudden sickness at heart, the hints he had heard thrown out concerning the Cardinal's possible views on the orphan heiress of

the name he had been taught to reverence early as to contemn that of his sire! Was it not strange that he should have ordained her reception in the recesses of his palace under circumstances of such extraordinary ostentation of welcome? The character and manners of the Prioress of Clerkenwell offered no great security for the safe-guidance and protection of her charge. But Roodspere himself was now suddenly grieved that he had spoken so warmly against the orphan novice's apparent purpose of immuring herself from such guardianship, even within the melancholy walls of a nunnery! A profound gloom by degrees gained like a nightmare on his spirits! and he could have been tempted to venture after the prioress and her company, and put them on their guard against the dangers to be apprehended from the very circumstances that seemed to banish any. The uselessness and impracticability of such an interposition did, nevertheless, occur to him with sufficient force to restrain any untoward manifestation—and one resource only remained. But it was one from whose inexhaustible fount help and protection flow to sustain the universe, as the light of the sun pervades its own vast but limited sphere! One habitual to the recourse

of the young champion of the cross, who believed that he had received his armour and weapons and commission from the God of Sabaoth, and owed to that Supreme Leader only an account of the manner in which he wielded them. But now it was to implore the aid of the invisible but all-pervading power of Good, on behalf of a helpless orphan and woman, that Raphael Roodspere knelt, oblivious altogether of his own great needs. Unwilling that this act of devotion should be observed, and, perhaps, mistaken for a pharisaic display, he stepped into a deep recess corresponding to one of the window-bays in the hall below, by a series of which, along one side, the gallery was also lighted. The deep, though motley-coloured shadow that filled the indentation from the lofty stained glass, emblazoned with the dusky colours of some ancient archbishop's arms, would effectually screen him, he imagined, from notice. And sinking on his knees in this species of oratory, Roodspere speedily became absorbed in a passion of supplication and prayer.

The devote stranger had not observed that on each side of the recess he had selected were doors that probably admitted to interior chambers of the palace. And so absorbed did

Roodspere continue in his pious exercise that he observed not the opening of one of these entrances and the emergence of two persons on the threshold. The massive framework of the window, and its gloom of particoloured shadow, completely shielded him from notice, even if the parties had not been absorbed—which it was soon evident they were—in a conversation of great interest. It was not until the voice of one of the interlocutors, uttering some words in tones but little raised above a whisper, came to his hearing that Roodspere imagined any one was near.

"Said he so? Why, then, harp well on that string, brother Lincoln, sith it gives forth such jangling music!" said this voice. "And, indeed, without any stretch of conscience, you may well urge any plea, and all, in the proof that a marriage between a brother and a brother's wife is neither lawful nor blessed—nay, rather is certainly most lawless and accursed, seeing that the very malison denounced in Holy Scripture has fallen on our royal prince! For he truly may be called childless that hath but a woman heir to succeed him in a realm than ever yet needed a good knight, with a sharp sword and a heavy hand, to rule it in any quietness. Harp well

that string, say I! The shoe pinches him worst there, for nothing irked his highness more in all Buckingham's treasons than the Carthusian's prophecy that the crown should depart from the line of Tudor for lack of true inheritance. And so it may well chance if Henry leaves no other issue than the sour Spaniard's daughter; and who can hope fruit from a tree that for seven springs has never blossomed?"

"It is the barren fig-tree, my lord, that should be cut down," replied the brother of Lincoln. "But that is certain since your grace, whose purposes never fail, is thereupon resolved. Yet, indeed, my lord, I still must fear his princely anger—which who may kindle and live? Should he cut me short with his ha! I am but lost, for it shakes men's hearts worse than a sudden petard!"

"Fear thou nothing, brother! When Wolsey is with a man, what should he fear in England?—whereas he may hope everything!" returned the first speaker, whom, with something nigh akin to the sensation described by the confessor of Henry VIII., under the petard simile, the unseen auditor could not but understand to be Wolsey himself! But simultaneously he felt that to have overheard the

smallest part of this dialogue was sufficient to cause his ruin, and that his only chance of safety was to remain undetected. Hoping the conversation would be as brief as it was sudden, he held his breath, and continued kneeling as fixedly as a statue of prayer.

"My most best lord! I trust me wholly to your disposal and assurance—I am as clay in the potter's hands, and verily do never forget that what I am, and eke what I may be, are as much of your creation as the first man of our Lord God's!" was the Bishop of Lincoln's reply, which, however, subsided from its tone of blasphemous adulation to one of querulous anxiety as he continued, "But in a matter of such high and dangerous concernment, methinks I would wade no farther in than as I shall see others, and specially your grace, going hand-in-hand with me!"

"Thou unbelieving Thomas, thou! What wouldst thou have?" returned Wolsey, playfully. "Have I not told thee that I have concluded all in France, and that as soon as the repudiation of this aunt of the empire is completed, our king's marriage with the gracious Duchess of Alençon is assured by all reasonable plights; and above all by the Frenchmen's interest running so evenly with the plan

that, without as it were sundering two already mingled streams, they cannot be separated by any malice or invention?"

"The Duchess of Alençon is a widow, my lord! I know not how that will chime in with his grace's known fantasies?" observed the confessor, with continued hesitation.

"What, though she be a widow? She is none the less the wittiest and pleasantest-spirited lady of the world; and who hath the nicest discernment to espy the like merits in others!" replied Wolsey, testily. "What, though she be a widow? I have persuaded him out of harder conceits than this foolish repugnance to sit down after another at a feast—for who can tell what he weds when he weds a woman?"

"In good troth, my lord, unless an angel from Heaven chose her—or your grace!" returned the courtly bishop. "But I fear me the divorce will not be so easily accomplished as your wisdom deems, though it must needs be acknowledged that hitherto the very elements do seem to have it in commission to obey you!"

"Wherefore not, brother Lincoln, wherefore not?" said Wolsey, with the fretful impatience of a spoilt child of fortune, thwarted of some

favourite toy. "So far, all goes as I would have it! The King's Highness is utterly wearied and disgusted with this lady's melancholy humour, and her autumnal years that hang not, as the promise of the seasons should, with lusty fruit. He hath greedily imbibed our suggestions concerning the unlawfulness of his matrimony with his brother's wife—and, let me tell you, once put a thought into his head, and you shall easier draw out the wedge from the unriven oak! He hath applied the light of his own wit and learning to the judgment of the case, and finds that the irrefragable doctor, on whose wisdom he places more stress than on all the Scriptures, which yet are consentaneous—that Aquinas himself condemns his coupling wholly! The Pope cannot and doth not refuse an equal hearing of the cause. Nay, I will be plain with you; his holiness hath already named myself and Campeius joint legatine commissioners, with ample powers, to adjudicate upon it. Daily I expect his arrival—and being, as Pope Clement is, under obligation almost of life and limb to our prince, Campeius himself so wealthily beneficed by his favour in England—they cannot think to refuse, so high majesty impetrating, the necessary condescension to his desires. The

queen herself knows nothing of the plot, and hath fallen prettily into our pretence, that these proceedings are merely to stablish, beyond cavil, her daughter's title. For the rude people, I take them into none account, and —"

"I crave pardon, my lord! but is your grace so well assured the queen suspects nothing of this practice?" humbly interrupted the less sanguine politician. "How is the abrupt departure, without any ceremony of leavetaking, either with the king or with your grace, to be explained of the Spaniard's ambassador? And if once the Emperor suspects what is in hand, he will scarce fail to let his holiness understand your project of dispossessing him of the holy chair, on the proven charges of his simony and bastardy."

"Why so, let be, the pope will still not dare to quarrel with us and France, his now only allies and upholders!" returned Wolsey, with vehemence.

"Unless he makes friends and common cause with the Emperor; which is like enough, being, as he now is, wholly at his power and mercy, my lord," said the bishop.

"But he hath already confirmed us our commission, under lead and wax, and I will make such diligence that he shall not have

time to revoke it, were it for his life!" returned Wolsey. "Go, go; dost thou think I have lost the trick of policies, my Lord of Lincoln? But what makes thee imagine that this infinitely secret matter, lodged in three bosoms only, can have oozed forth to the light?"

"Why hath his holiness appointed Campeius to the office, a crafty Italian, and subjected to politic fits of the gout?" said the bishop. "And do not all men observe with how infinitely less than the respect due to your greatness and merits, which overtop it all, the queen entreats you of late? Yea, though methinks she no otherwise cherishes her pert French waiting damsel, Mistress Boleyn, she encourages all the onslaughts of her prate on your grace—which verily our blessed Lord himself might scantily, with patience, have endured!"

"You are right, brother, you are right!" replied Wolsey, in tones that changed suddenly and remarkably from those of exultant hope, to the churning of deep though suppressed wrath. "But our lady queen, forsooth, is too precise and peevish to see any good in us, because we live not after the fashion of the mad monks of Montserrat, on herbs and water,

and mumbling orisons till the angels themselves be aweary of the drowsy drone! But she will know herself not to show so erminely in men's eyes when she stands convict—as soon she must on evident canonical reasons—of this incestuous marriage with her husband's brother! But for the tart-tongued wench of whom ye speak, she needs no encouragement but her own audacity and wilfulness, that will needs send her to try her moth's wings in the torch! Withal, I am well informed my foolish enviers and gainsayers in the court, with the Howard faction to the boot, have joined hand and glove with her to my perdition! Ay, named her their she-Sampson, that is, to pull down the Church itself about our ears; for, save the mark! she hath her judgment also in religious matters, as well as in the sway of a satin robe, or the slash of a pinked sleeve!"

"But I do marvel your grace, knowing this—knowing this gorgeous lady for your enemy and detractor—should suffer her so near the king's person, whom she lays herself out so lavishly to win—with what good success none can doubt that watch his dotage over her!" replied the episcopal confederate.

"I was to blame, in sooth, I was to blame!" returned Wolsey, with a depth of regret and

bitterness that even startled his suggestive counsellor. "I thought it was but a matter to amuse his grace, while I toiled in my deeper policies, not dreaming—but thou sayest, brother, 'tis so!—I had thought to have found the business concluded on my return, according to his highness's wonted fashion, whose fleshly appetites have ever yet surfeited in the glut of possession, to the death! Yet you are the king's confessor—and you say you have not found occasion to shrive him of the transgression whereof I know, three months agone, he would full fain have dree'd the penalties. How may this be? Her report in France gives argument of all vanity and accostableness—yet the king speeds not in his suit! Belike she thinks to play a deeper game with us than the rest, and market herself to a chariness. But look to it, Mistress Anne! the chapmen weary at nightfall, and leave the too thrifty butter-wife to trudge home with her eggs unsold! Even as light and unsubstantial a ware do you market! But Wolsey will have no bidders with him for his king's love and favour! We will reign there, as ever, alone, as jealously as He who suffers no creature in the heavens, or the earth, or the waters that are under the earth, to contend with His supremacy!"

"I would humbly counsel your grace to lose no time then, for she is hourly worming herself more deeply into his highness's favour. Yesterday, when he knelt to me at confession, he twice uttered her name, instead of our Lady's, in his prayers."

"Ay, indeed!" said Wolsey, in uneasy and exasperated tones. "I will take thy counsel, be well assured, brother; and, besides, the king expects from me the gratification of all his humours, of whatsoever sort. I will get him his plaything, and thereby acquire me a new claim upon his love, and mine enemies will find it to their profit to lay down their arms with those of their chieftainess. How have they so soon forgotten Buckingham? In him I spared not the royal blood of a Plantagenet! But the mercer Boleyn's—if they anger me too far, even in a woman's veins—I shall not deem too dully-hued to be poured back into its native kennel by my provoked indignation! Nay, worse may chance to her! I have heard of her in France, that she favoured the new heresy there, and would frequent Louis de Berquin's ravings in Paris, as an he spoke God's oracles. And being, as I am now, resolved to root out these malignant weeds of heresy with fire and plough through-

out the land, it is not like that I shall spare one that would also entangle my feet to an overthrow! Rest thee content, lief brother, I shall find my way with this restiff jennet, too, in mine own time. Leave the task to me, for I may say, albeit I would not all men heard me, I have some little skill in breaking in women to their paces!"

The confessor responded with a low, acquiescing, profoundly deferential murmur of cachination, and then, after a moment's pause, requested leave to kiss the cardinal's hand and withdraw.

"Well, be it so, I have other iron on the anvil to weld. These cursed monks of Westminster weary me more than all the rest of the crew," said Wolsey. "But, no, you shall but salute the holy relic in our signet. We are not worthy of more honour from an episcopal brother now, nor shall be until we dispossess simoniacal Clement, and restore the free exercise of the Holy Spirit in a canonical election to the papacy. France has sworn to aid us in this purpose, on condition that we assist him, tooth and nail, in driving the Germans out of Italy. Let be, let be! it shall be seen if I answer not the mansworn Emperor's mock: 'priests should be patient men.'"

"For a purpose so beneficial—nay, so utterly necessary to the weal of all christendom—I am willing to put myself and my poor fortunes to the hazard," responded the confederate, visibly cheered. "In all christendom, only your grace hath the ability and will to save the church, so tangled now in the folds of heresy. The perfidious Almayne will live yet to repent his false play with the cards, albeit they seemed to win him the game."

"I shall leave something to reward my friends and well-wishers in England whenever I go hence for Italy," said Wolsey, "and look to have the choice of my bishoprics here, brother, when I am supreme in Rome. Meanwhile, proceed on the path chalked out for thee, and apply thyself diligently to keep the king's conscience awake wherein it hath so long slumbered, insensible to the warnings of Heaven sent in his dead-born sons. It is a wise and a most necessary policy for the weal of this realm, whose wounds of civil war are scarcely yet scarred over, were it nought else. God be your speed; and look that as you go you take no skill to hide that you have been with us. Plotting Norfolk and feather-brained Suffolk alike, will think twice what they whisper

against us when they shall see the king's confessor is of one counsel and bosom with us."

Luckily for Roodspere, with all his anxiety to secure the devotion of this necessary agent of his policy, the haughty cardinal extended his farewell condescension no further than to raise the bishop, after he had knelt and kissed his reliquary. He advanced not a step beyond the threshold of the oratory, where both stood; and as the obsequious dependent retired the whole breadth of the gallery, in a deep abaisance, he wonderfully missed perceiving Roodspere when he raised his head and made his exit.

The unwilling espial's danger was now either that Cavendish might abruptly return in search of him, or the cardinal come into the gallery and discern him. But Wolsey continued to stand at the door of his oratory, either watching his confederate out, or absorbed in reverie. The latter appeared to be the case, for he at last exclaimed aloud, as if unable to contain the swelling passion in his heart, "Ay, King of Castile, Arragon, and all the Spains! Emperor of Germany! Lord of Naples and the Milanese! Inheritor of a New World!—with all thy pride and power, and these titles of an earth-divinity, thou shalt find that the *butcher's*

dog, as thou callest Wolsey, can bite as well as bark, vaunt loudly as thou wilt that thou hast drawn his teeth!"

And the Cardinal withdrew, closing the oratory door after him, and audibly bolting it within.

CHAPTER VIII.

THOMAS CROMWEL.

And thus far hear me, Cromwel,
And when I am forgotten, as I shall be;
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
Of me must more be heard of—say I taught thee.

KING HENRY VIII.

THE moment the sound of the bolts ceased, Roodspere arose from his kneeling attitude, in a state of indescribable agitation. But his judgment did not desert him, and he felt that he had not an instant to lose in devising some means of extrication from the perilous consequences of detection in such a position. It could scarcely be doubted, the Cardinal would speedily hear of his attendance in the gallery—so that the only hope of eluding his wrath lay in the possibility of giving rise to an inference that he might have been in it, without overhearing the important state secrets discussed between the minister and his subordinate. Fortunately

the gallery was of an extent to countenance the supposition, if the listener apprehended were at its farthest extremity. The superb tapestry that covered the walls, like the pictures in a modern gallery of art, might well be supposed to allure a stranger the whole length of the apartment. The Cardinal had not stepped from the threshold of his oratory—and could not therefore decide, from his own recollections, whether this extended space was clear or not. At all events, it was the only means of obviating suspicion that suggested itself to Roodspere. On tiptoe, and lightly as the silken figures in the tapestry might have stepped from their frames, he followed the guidance of his inspiration. Chance befriended him. He had time to take his station at the end of the gallery, and feign to be absorbed in the view from the great window there, before any arrival disturbed him. And then it was only a number of musicians, tuning and thrumming their various instruments, as if preparing for a concert, who crossed the gallery, and entered the corridor leading to what were styled the privy chambers of the palace.

The end of the gallery, where Roodspere stood, formed a circular apartment, probably

in one of the numerous lantern towers of York Place; isolated on all sides, excepting that on which it adhered to the main building. It was lighted also by a round window, from which circumstance, he afterwards learned, it was called the "Bull's Eye." Or it might be, the courtiers gave it the designation from the accidental fact that it commanded a view along the river to the royal palace at Westminster; and thence it seemed as if the jealous and insatiable minister could personally keep up that observation on the court of his sovereign which they found to their cost he seldom or never relaxed.

An animated spectacle of river navigation was below Roodspere's glance—and in the distance were the stately masses of the royal palace, above which the lofty roof of Westminster Abbey was visible. But he took no notice of this diversified scene; his mind was entirely absorbed in the thoughts awakened in it by the revelations forced upon him during his involuntary espionage. The glimpses he had caught into the secrets of Wolsey's character and policy struck him with a protracted amazement! His domineering pride, his worldly vices, his intriguing and revengeful spirit, could not, indeed, surprise any one acquainted

with his history. But the project he had now formed to gratify those dominant emotions of his nature, appeared to Roodspere fraught with momentous consequences of a far different kind. The reformers had every reason to apprehend a most dangerous opposition in the influence of the princess, mother of the heiress of the realm, whom Wolsey thus conspired to remove from their way. Queen Katharine was a devote adherent of the ancient tenets, and was allied by blood to their most bigoted and powerful supporters throughout Europe. On the contrary it was rumoured that the court of France, and King Francis's witty and learned sister especially, were inclined to favour the Lutheran revolt. Political motives influenced with them chiefly, perhaps—but not the less efficiently, in favour of the great cause! Might it then be that the cardinal himself was raised as a blind but active instrument of heaven in the work of the Reformation? Until this period Roodspere had never considered theologically the question of the lawfulness of the king's marriage with his brother's widow. But the natural delicacy of his feelings was opposed to the propriety of such an union; and it must be forgiven to the weakness of humanity, if the infinite benefits that might flow to his trampled

cause, from its dissolution, filled Roodspere with an ardent hope—almost a conviction—that in the oracles of the Scriptures he should find its condemnation. Yet the perfidy and cruelty of the means to be employed did certainly stagger the reformer's eager conclusions. But evil men, he mused, like tempests, hail, and other disastrous agencies of providence, could only work by the laws of their organization; and Wolsey's unprincipled efforts to attain the popedom might be turned, by superior decrees, into the very levers of its overthrow!

This idea wonderfully restored Roodspere's courage; he ceased even to dread the approaching interview with his unkind and formidable sire. His awe of his greatness had, indeed, magically diminished contemplating the unsound inner carpentery of the colossal edifice he had reared in his fortunes, for the ignorant homage of mankind. The clay feet of the idol were too visible! "Let me thank, and no longer blame him, for that he has shown me always so little of a parent's kindness—that his gift of life has been to me only a sorrowful and unprized boon, such as ostentatious chance might well throw and forget in the same breath!—And if not love, why should

I fear him? This stately palace is but a theatre of pollution—these glittering axemen guard a tyrant and a betrayer—this pompous retinue knees but a luciferous ambition which also shall fall from the stars! God be praised, I have so little cause to mourn its fall!"

The sounds that interrupted this soliloquy were certainly not meant for its echo. The musicians he saw arrive had evidently left some doors ajar behind them, in their passage to the privy chambers, for a strain of festive harmony came very distinctly, though from a distance, to Roodspere's sense. He listened for an instant somewhat attentively, and distinguished a fine solo voice of a man, accompanying himself on the lute with incomparable skill. The words he sung were evidently those of some amatory ditty, in the taste of the times, still less suited to the locality, one would have thought, than even the reformer's cogitations. But though a hired maker of sweet sounds, the musician's tones were full of passion and glow, as if his own sentiments were in some measure the inspiration of the strain. And it might well be, for it was Mark Smeaton that sung, destined to play so basely amorous a part in Anne Boleyn's tragedy, and who was

already held to be the choicest minstrel about the court. This was his lay:—

Oh, that together—none beside—
We twain were in the woodlands straying!
The secrets now my heart must hide
Should burst like streams that go a-maying
All through the meadows' golden flowers
When spring brings back love's roaming hours!
Arbours, with honeysuckle blind,
Shall shield us from all eyes bewraying—
The sunflecked daisies will be kind,
And tell no tales to love's betraying—
Doves in their bowers will but coo
The more when they shall spy us woo!
Oh, that together—none beside—
We twain might dwell apart for ever
Where scarce the wandering sunbeams glide—
In mossy caves, where frowns not sever
Lovers that would be kind and true
As, sweet, I fain would prove with you!

The strain, as we have said, was harmonious and tender in voice and melody as the murmur of wood and water to the nightingale's moonlit serenade—yet it troubled Roodspere, and he was glad when it ceased. To whom, then, was this amorous homage paid? To what ears this melting descant addressed? It came from the direction of those inner recesses of the palace, whither the nuns of Clerkenwell and

their beautiful novice had been escorted! Could it then by possibility be intended for their delectation and enthralment? If so, why should Wolsey take such pains to please his submissive and powerless visitants? A deadly sickness glided over Roodspere's heart as he suddenly recalled the laughing but significant reflections of George Boleyn and the Lord Bigod, on the novice's presence in the train of the Prioress of Clerkenwell! The announcement made by Cavendish of the festive solemnities awaiting them—something peculiar in his manner—also recurred with painful vividness to Roodspere's fancy. Could it possibly be that, after having crushed the father by his severity, an excess of vengeance—or a still more lawless and baneful passion—urged the Cardinal on the debasement of the child? If it might be so, what hope of escape was there for an inexperienced and unprotected girl, in the power of the subtle, eloquent, magnificent, and dreaded Wolsey? Yet did this seem so cruel and complicated a wickedness that Roodspere, with a shudder, strove to dismiss it from his apprehensions. It seemed such a desecration of nature as even the stern lawgiver of the Hebrews had forbidden, when he declared that the kid should not be seethed in the milk of

its dam. Remembering also the prioress's demeanour and repute, he took consolation from the thought that she might be the object of this gallant and sumptuous reception. Roodspere was not deep read enough as yet in the dark lore of humanity to understand what charms innocence and purity may possess to the jaded sensualist; and how the fiend himself, in the beginning of evil, took delight in their corruption and debasement!

What would not Roodspere have given, as these thoughts chased and contended with each other in his mind, to have passed magnetically into the mysterious penetralia of this glittering palace, and with his own eyes have satisfied himself of the safety of the youthful daughter of his once lord? An irresistible impulse had, in fact, drawn him some paces towards the adit by which the musicians entered to the scene of festivity, when, luckily for himself, his steps were arrested by the abrupt entrance of two persons. In one of them he recognised Cavendish. The other was a man of square and strong-set figure, in the furred gown and cap worn by persons in the profession of the law—in whose countenance it was hard to say whether a character of subtle though smiling sagacity, or of determined energy, predominated.

And equally difficult would it have been to decide which qualities were in ascendancy in the moral composition of Thomas Cromwel—for he it was—who was destined to play so memorable a part in the changeful tragedy of the English Reformation. The gentleman-usher's formal introduction was scarcely necessary to announce the identity to Roodspere, who was struck with a conviction, at the first glance, that he had previously met with some similar personage of the name; though where and how he could not for a considerable time call to mind.

The circumstances of Cromwel's career accounted for much of the singular combination of personal and mental qualities which were destined, at no distant period, to set him so prominently on the stage of the world—all of which were essential to the great agency events had in store for him. The son of a blacksmith, his strong-knit frame, sinewy hands, and peculiarly muscular right arm, still indicated that his earliest years were spent in the toils of Tubal Cain. In succession, he had been a merchant's clerk, a soldier of fortune, and a lawyer; and in these capacities, in the course of a wandering life, he had acquired the most extensive knowledge of men and of the world, a

tinge of misanthropy, not far removed from scorn of mankind, and a facility of principles too nigh akin to indifference to any but such as served his own purposes and ambition. Nevertheless, Cromwel was capable of the most generous and kind emotions; possessed iron nerve, and a resolution which no difficulties could daunt, or obstacles could baffle. In his last vocation of the law, he attracted the attention of Cardinal Wolsey, by his activity, his audacity, his ready ingenuity, and his poverty! For Wolsey loved to make his creatures absolutely his own, by making them from nothing; and the future Earl of Essex, and main agent of the Reformation, owed the beginning of his fortunes to a church which he was destined to overthrow, but which, in the end, retaliated upon him with a like destruction, as the dying scorpion leaves its sting in the marrow of its crusher's grasp.

Cromwel entered speaking to Master Cavendish. "How! he will see no one to-day though he brought him the news that Pope Clement had died of the pip? Well, well, our scholar's business can abide his grace's leisure better than a poached egg! But what is all this thrumming and skirling in the privy chambers, Master Cavendish? Methought

you told me even now that the nuns of Clerkenwell only were there—whom such piping revelry, methinks, should rather affright than delight?"

"I spoke truth, master secretary—they only are within—at a most costly and especial banquet with my lord!—save that there are certain musicians posted in the Seven-Deadly-Sins' gallery, and Fool Patch is set to keep the ladies in laughter and merriment, if it should chance my lord's sadder affairs make him to muse," replied the gentleman-usher.

"Good, good!—but the proverb will be marred—one fool will *not* make many—he will find them ready made," said the secretary, with some asperity. "Prithee, canst thou tell me, brother, whether a certain simpleton novice they call Lily-Virgin be in the train of my jolly lady prioress?"

"Doubtless, master secretary, sithence my lord bade me prepare his oratory for her reception, where he intends to examine her conscience in some matters wherein she hath displeased him," replied Cavendish.

"Ay, indeed?" said Cromwel. "Well, no matter—his grace's wisdom and discretion may well provide a remedy for what is amiss! Where is this scholar of ours? Welcome to

York Place, worthy and learned doctor!—for, I doubt not, you are such now in degree as well as in merit," he concluded, courteously removing his coif.

Before this address was made, Roodspere was aware that he became an object of indirect but keen scrutiny, on the part of his correspondent. He was scarcely prepared for the easy frankness and cordiality of its tone; and he replied with visible hesitation, "I have obeyed my Lord Legate's command in all things, master secretary—and so hath the university," and was silent.

"In all things, master scholar?" returned Cromwel, with a good-humoured but strangely significant smile. Then, turning to the gentleman-usher, "We will not trouble you further, Master Cavendish; go and help the fool to entertain my lady prioress and her grey geese—whiles his grace uses his wondrous eloquence to bring their snow-feathered pullet, or Paulet, to her natural woman's senses! Little enow, forsooth; but enough, I should opine, in the end, to keep her out of a nunnery! Nay, brother Cavendish, be not offended with me—a wise man may play the fool when it serves his turn—and better than thou have held the candle to the devil when he walked their way."

"You are ever at your dark jesting, Master Cromwel; but, I thank my God, I understand no more than suits with the duty of my place!" replied the gentleman-usher, rather pettishly.

"Ay, we should thank God for all things of grace, Master Cavendish! But, to speak plainly, brother, thou knowest where two are good company, the third should step out to see how the wind blows! My business is private with this reverend young man."

Cavendish bowed, still somewhat out of humour; but comprehending that his presence was not required, he withdrew, with a protracted sidelong glance at Roodspere.

"He will make no odds when he joins my lord's fool, howbeit!—there will be a pair of them," continued the sarcastic secretary. "But before we talk, let us see if the doors are closed, and Master Cavendish's fox-slippers glided elsewhere. He is a good old lad, but loves to be in all men's secrets better than they to trust them to him."

Somewhat to Roodspere's dissatisfaction he proceeded on tiptoe, and carefully ascertained that all the doors opening on the gallery were closed—that included which had admitted the sounds of revel. Returning, he made a gesture

to Roodspere, and led him back to the circular chamber at the end of the gallery.

"All is well," said the secretary, smiling at his visitor's intent expression. "The cardinal's grace is at his noon repast, which he hurries not on a fast-day—and this is a feast-day it seems! My fellow, Gardiner, God be praised, is wrangling with the pope's jailers in Rome, and we have a little peace of his viperous tongue. But, by all the holiness he will find, or carry there! he will owe me an ill turn when he comes home, and learns how I have ravelled one of his choicest webs of policy, and brought you hither, face to face with the Cardinal!"

"Did Master Stephen oppose my coming to his grace's presence?" said Roodspere, with emotion, though not much surprised at the intimation.

"Ay, and would, if he might, all other access, for he is as jealous of my lord as if he had bought the fee-simple of his favour with his immortal soul!—which it may truly also be that he hath," said Cromwel. "But I see now why he misliked and disserved you the most! Howbeit, he is away—on his secret Roman embassy, forsooth—and other counsels prevail. Know ye not that he had persuaded the Cardi-

nal, on the credit of a lunatic friar's astrology, that it were more fatal for him to meet thine eyes than the basilisk's?—Good faith, I had much ado to reason his grace out of that dotage, albeit none knew better how false Hopkins's prophecies had proved in Buckingham's affairs! The astrologer said the good duke should wear a crown—and so deprived him of the head to put it on! But until these late matters came to pass, I might in no wise prevail."

"I know nothing to have commended me,—of late, to the Cardinal's special favour?" said Roodspere, with some secret consciousness to the contrary mantling on his brows.

"What! not thy company-keeping with the Cambridge Lutherans—thy wondrously loving and most eloquent epistle on behalf of railing Bilney?" said Cromwel, laughing outright at Roodspere's astonished and perplexed expression. "But on the whole, it did thee good! I took occasion thereupon to recite to his grace the fable of him who had a son of whom the astrologers predicted he should be destroyed by a lion. Upon this the lad was for great carefulness shut up in a strong tower, wherein were divers pictures of men and beasts set, to amuse his imprisoned eyes. Among them, of

a lion; which he one day contemplating, out of measure enwrathed with his captivity, exclaims, 'And thou art the cause!' and strikes the canvas a fierce blow; wherein was a rusty nail, which, piercing his hand, festered to a mortal wound! This fable I told the cardinal, who, spying my drift, gave me, at last, permission to send for you to his court, on an office which will require but little of your presence in it, yet give you meet means of advancement. But so much of what from time to time has been sent us by envious spies concerning you and your fellows, I have so altered, softened, suppressed, and otherwise garbled, that I dreaded, unless forewarned, you might, in your interview with the cardinal, stumble on some intelligence to him unknown, and awaken the suspicion of his watchful nature."

Roodspere looked amazed, but kept an embarrassed silence.

"Ye marvel wherefore I should cherish you whom—unless in some wild, whirling dream, long agone—I never remember to have seen?" resumed Cromwel, more gravely. "But from the first I liked of ye, and knew there must be something good in ye, when I understood how my bitter gainsayer and crosser, Stephen Gardiner, hated you! Then the Cardinal

would oft speak of you with good affection, and regret that he must hold ye at distance—nay, he took the less delight in the rich report of your learning and virtuous commendation that Stephen persuaded him they rendered you the more dangerous and capable of fulfilling the prophecy!"

"I never gave Master Stephen cause of offence, that I wot of," said Roodspere.

"What cause of offence doth the pheasant give to the weasel, when it sucks its eggs?" returned Cromwel. "He saw the Cardinal had good likings for you, and feared your promotion might balk his own, or some of his friends'. But, for my part, I thought that one good turn deserved another; and awhile ago his grace told me his attention was first turned to my admirable qualities by your commendation."

"By mine?" repeated Roodspere, after an instant's recollection, adding, "I did indeed speak once or twice to his grace concerning the courageous carriage of a man of laws, of your name, on the horrible occasion of the burning of Hunne; but knew not—"

"Was it even there we first encountered? This is strange!" exclaimed Cromwel. "I do, indeed, remember me of a tall, ragged youth—ghastly with famine and fear—with

whom I gossipped before the broil began! None other."

"I was he," replied Roodspere.

"I say that this is strange! considering on what special business I have procured your recal. It might go something to persuade one of a faith shaken by watching how this world wags, that an avenging Providence indeed mixes its might in men's affairs!" said the secretary, with some visible and certainly unwonted emotion. "But was it indeed thou in those beggar weeds? Ay, truly, thy tongue was tipped with fire even then! Be not ashamed that I should remember of you in your poorer estate, sith the cardinal has told me your whole story, master scholar! Neither be shamefaced to own so glorious a sire—lest peradventure you countenance Gardiner's lie, for the which I once heard the Cardinal dismally rate him, that you were his enemy, Sir Amias Paulet's, own misbegot!"

"He lied, indeed; most utterly — most malignly, there!" returned Roodspere, with a vehemence he very rarely used in speaking on the subject, that evidently pleased Cromwel.

"Maintain your true parentage then apertly, and especially to the Cardinal—who is something offended with your close concealment of

the fact at Cambridge. He dreads no scandal now—he is no longer a parish priest starving on a glebe that scarcely keeps a sheep in maggots," said the secretary. "I see well my whispering genius is no cogging devil, but a true counsellor! The Cardinal already loves you so as methinks only forbidden inclinings do—for seldom one loveth his lawful son, or his wife, or anything else that he may keep with the commandments, as Pope Borgia did his queans, and his Cæsar, and his ill-got dominion! Marry, then, you have only to show yourself benignly on your part, and we shall more than balance all Gardiner's sway and counsels, that do as continually thwart me in my acts as the devil doth all good! But now, ere you coast the Cardinal, it is fitting you should know on what special business I have procured your recal. Can logic teach you that?"

"Since I am not summoned to answer any imputed offence, I must conclude some privy purpose of his grace's own?" Roodspere answered.

"Well reasoned in Ba-ra-co, master scholar!—your ergo is fairly drawn," said Cromwel, smiling with the mixture of mild contempt a man of the world might well feel for

the scholastic logic of the age. "But, forget not, I am the middle figure of the syllogism; for it was I who suggested how profitably you might be employed in the matter, reciting how, after your sermon, in Jesus', against the life monastic, the monks nigh tore you to pieces as ye came down from the pulpit! The Cardinal thereupon owned you were well fitted for the office we needed one to fill, and was besides moved with your evident danger, abiding among the buncing black cattle yonder!"

"I do indeed esteem the monks' whole system to be founded on a fallacy—to be a web of snares and delusions for the human soul! But may it then be, Master Cromwel, that the light from Sinai has descended so deep down in the vallies, that the truth and simplicity of the Gospel should also find favourers in the very centre of the Egyptian darkness that overspreads the land?" exclaimed Roodspere, with rash eagerness.

"I hate the monks, and specially those of Westminster; there is gospel enow to serve the turn," said Cromwell, drily. "But, I pray you, Master Roodspere, if you would not bring your friends, as well as yourself, into jeopardy, speak not this shibboleth of light and darkness

among us! I hate the monks, and they me! Truly, there is such feud between Thomas Cromwel and all colours of the cowl, that either they or I must be rooted out of the land. I am of those who either make or mar themselves utterly in what they undertake; and I have special cause, as I have said, to hate the Westminster monks. Heard ye how their rabble treated me when they hurtled me into the Sanctuary? They beat and abused me into every colour of the rainbow, covered me with tar—rolled me in Hunne's ashes, and would have murthered me as a make-weight to his tragedy, but that the monks grew afraid, and sent orders to have me turned adrift! And now will you aid me in such a work as to bring just judgment upon them—not merely for their murther of Hunne, but for all other their crying enormities, that do daily call down upon them a blacker shower than of old made Sodom and Gomorrah wastes of fire and flame?"

"With whatsoever means He who sent that destruction down of old might sanction now!" returned Roodspere, with a vehement kindling of opinions which recent circumstances had roused to the strength of passions in his heart. "But how say you, 'murther,'

Master Cromwel? Deem you, as methinks the Londoners did, that Marchant Hunne came unfairly by his end?"

"Did I say 'murther?'" repeated Cromwel, musingly. "Good troth, Master Logic, that is one of the maziest of the puzzles I do expect you to read me aright in the Abbey of Westminster. But, in faith, I cannot well see what the monks were to gain by murdering him, seeing that they had him trussed and ready for the spit, on lawful provocation! Unless some portion of what I did once take for a jealous old man's ravings can be true! Else indeed I cannot devise why the monks should take on them so odious and unnecessary a deed!"

"What jealous raving, master secretary? I heard, indeed, Hunne's wife bore testimony against him; but on matters of religion only!" said Roodspere, with much interest.

"You shall hear further—though I well believe your zeal needs little quickening," said Cromwel, with a smile. "I was Hunne's advocate and legal prompter in the business of the mortuary, as doubtless you have heard; and he confided so wholly in me, that I learned what were his suspicions of his wife—which were not unsupported by strong seemings!

She was a young and gainly woman, I have heard, for I never saw her, but of a wilful wit and ways. They told me she could dance most feetishly, and sing like a thrush in May—whereas Hunne was an old man, of a studious, morose habitude, much given to religious researches and inquiries—and, of consequence, no doubt, as the monks suspected, more than half way gone over to the new opinions. A jealous old hunks, I can well imagine him—and one that kept a gloomy house overhead. Contrariwise, from all accounts, his wife was given to the sports and junketings of youth, and marvellously devote—to the shows, feast-days, and merry-makings of the church! Hunne's house was likely enough to be distasteful to her, so, for he was of the new kind of Lollards the French have got among them, taught by one Calvinus, who do believe no man shall be saved unless his visage vinegar milk, and his garb out-gloom the gallows' raven's!

"Hunne himself confessed to me—not in such form, mayhap—that, not content with worrying his own mind to lick a file smooth, he must trouble her silly woman's fancies with his heresies. Marry, she left him as oft as she might—at least so he made his plaint to

me—at home with his wisdom, and sallied forth on all manner of maygames and festivals, which our merry-go-lightly church keeps under the name of saints' days and pardonings. Above all, frequenting the Abbey of Westminster, under plea of a special devotion to St. Edward. Rather, meseems, because there are to be seen the gaudiest shows, and the goodliest gestes, and romances are told in the sermons, and the most luscious sweet music is to be heard in the world, trilled from the lips of young choir-boys and novices, whom the jolly monks choicely pick out of all their vassalage for the purpose. But Hunne took it into his husband's head that worse ill might come of her gadding than a cold hearthstone at home. Of old, he knew, the sons of God could see that the daughters of men were fair, and they are quick-sighted enow in such matters still! In brief, Hunne liked his wife's devotion so ill at last, that he forbade her to frequent Westminster any more. Thence quarrels endless arose between them; and, so powerfully wrought heaven's grace within her, that, I heard from many quarters, she would to Westminster, by stealth, whether her husband willed it or nilled it!

"At last a child was born to them, and

there was rest in the house awhile to nurse it. But all of a sudden, the rage broke out wilder than heretofore. Mistress Hunne would go to give thanks for her first-born to St. Edward. But piously unwilling to vex her spouse, she went to the churching alone, as to a holy work that needed no witnessing. Natheless, her step-daughter, who loved her not, and was indeed the older and the craftier of the twain, took care to warn old Marchant Hunne; and he followed after her in a flaming rage, to bring her back by the hair of her head. Now mark you what he averred to me!—One of the monks there, suspecting no harm, or willing to do a brother a mischief who shamed all the rest by his learning and sanctity, secretly informed Hunne where he might find his wife—not even in one of their snug chapels and confessionals, but in a cell in the roof of the Abbey, which this holy young Dunstan of whom I speak had fashioned himself, and named after a canonized abbot of theirs of yore—St. Wulfin's Hermitage! The false brother is now the Abbey Almoner; but you must care never to divulge the part he took in the affair, or Prior Sancgraal would speedily deprive me of a well-assured and watchful spy and coadjutor!"

"Prior Sancgraal?—the name haunts me!—some such strange one, methinks, the monk had who gave Hunne's body to the flames?" said Roodspere, on whose memory the particulars of that hideous event were minutely impressed, and who had heard so much of late to revive them.

"Even so—he was but a simple monk, then, of his degree, if not of his qualities," continued Cromwel. "But peace—let me tell my tale! 'Tis certain, Almoner Benson meant no ill, and that he told Marchant Hunne how the case stood purely to quiet his alarms, and the shooting pains in his brows! But rather it added to them—for until then his wife had always assured him that her confessor was a certain dried old mummy of the Abbey, whose chief pleasure is to whip himself for his offences, and to harry the vassalage with all manner of exactions—one Father Gislebert, the treasurer. But now it appeared that it was our beatified Dominus Sancgraal, who even then was renowned for his bitter zeal against the Lutherans, and the goodly shows and legends he devised to please the people. I own that he was already also held to be a saint—but then he was but a young one!—withered and deformed, it is also most true,

but endowed with a magic that wins well with women, in the marvels of his story, and in his glosing tongue! Be it as it might, Hunne was of a sudden as one possessed with all the fiends of jealousy. And his despair moved charitable Brother Quodvultdeus, of whom I spoke, to such compassion that—to convince him how mistaken he was—he showed him by what means he might mount to the Hermitage, and with his own eyes ascertain the groundlessness of his suspicions!

"Hunne afterwards avouched to me that of his transit he remembered little more than that the good brother, his informant, opened a massive door in the south-west cross, wherein were stairs that wound upward to the first great gallery of the church. This he traversed, and whirling up a second flight, he came into a second gallery—thence into a third—and thence by a winding staircase, black as doom, to a strong-barred door, hung on the pillars of an arch, at a dizzy height above the ground. I shudder still when I bethink me what desperate madness men's passions will make possible! The Hermitage of St. Wulfin, it seems, is a vast loft in the roof of the Abbey, extending over the chapels of the shrine and other most ancient buildings of the church, to

where it joins with the new chapel of our late lord, King Henry VII. It is lighted from the great tower of the transept, at a prodigious height, by arched apertures, into which scarcely a spider would seem to have room to creep, with its venomous hunch, to one who looks upward from the floor of the church. But Marchant Hunne, finding the door was barred, and that he could make no one hear within—yea, and yet discerning his infant's unhushed cry, adventured to clamber round the pillar on which the door was hung, from an archway in the clerestory where he stood, to one of those narrow openings in the wall of the Hermitage, having to stride the angle of the tower—an old man, possessed and frantic with his rage!

"I must needs avow what Marchant Hunne himself admitted: that he should have fallen, and been dashed to pieces in the church below, but for a strong arm that was stretched out from the Hermitage, and drew him across the gulf with a giant's grasp. Dominus Sancgraal himself saved him, Hunne denied not. Yet I know not how—unless he can indeed work miracles, or his heaped shoulders boast a double pith and brawn! But the wife was there, in good faith, with her baby child, and

fury deprived Hunne of all sense of gratitude and thanksgiving. In vain did that godly young monk explain to him, that his wife, discontented with his refusal to have her churched in the usual form, had come to him privately for the purpose, not to infringe the obedience a faithful woman owes to her spouse, in all but unlawful commands. The contest grew between them; and Hunne, like a raving madman, accused the good young monk of the seduction of his wife, in plain terms; which he right soberly denied, and retaliated by denouncing on him his secret heresies, and threatening him with fire and faggot for his meed. Thereupon Hunne snatched the child; and because the woman resisted, they nigh rent its little limbs between them, till the mother, fearing to slay it, relinquished the prize. Meanwhile, Dominus Sancgraal interposed, and Hunne, finding no better could be done, fled away with the babe, supposing its bereaved dam would certainly follow! But it was not so; and the next news were that Mistress Hunne had taken refuge from her heretic husband's mad-dog rage in the Sanctuary!

"And thence no persuasions or entreaties —not even the certainty that her child was

withering and dying for lack of a mother's milk and care—could ever bring her forth! So when the deserted thing perished, Marchant Hunne took a new obstinacy, and refused to pay the mortuary on its winding-sheet. But in truth, it had none: it was buried, all the gossips said, as carelessly as a dropped lamb.—It was about this season Marchant Hunne came to me, as a client, having heard, I doubt not, of my audacity in pleading causes, being at the time rat-poor, and willing to make or mar myself, as my saying is, on any cast. You can keep a Lollard's secret, Master Roodspere?—and know that Hunne bitterly averred the child was none of his—that a strange blood and lineaments most visibly showed in all its characters! Mayhap the step-daughter's rancour suggested it; but the thought worked like mad yeast in his naturally choleric and seething blood. And indeed I also thought it something hard layfolks should have to pay the monks for burying their own bairns! And so we resisted them, step by step, as all England has heard—until his implacable, overboiling rage, and my too deep skill, brought us both to the very pitch of triumph and ruin in the *præmunire!* Oh, how he howled and

hugged me for very joy, when I showed him my law in Richard II.'s statute of provisors! Our Cardinal has violated that as much in exercising his legacy by the Pope's authority—but might makes right! The monks were not so propped—and, finding themselves in a cleft stick, to get out of it, they reversed King Alexander's plan to solve perplexities, and tied a noose instead of cutting one!—And now, how say you, Master Roodspere? Was it not fitting I should enter my protest on Hunne's behalf that day?"

"Of proof direct, I espy none—and it were scant justice to condemn men on surmises and inimical conclusions," said Roodspere, with a judicial gravity that made Cromwel secretly smile. "These, as you have said, may be but an old man's jealous fancies—for truly, what needed the monks to do murther on a prisoner whom they could so easily have condemned to an open and lawful (as they deem it) doom?"

"Unless to prevent Hunne's accusation of their young saint! It would have given a blur to his reputation, and old Gislebert is known nigh to worship him, and to have brought him up from infancy to fill a niche!" replied the secretary. "But whither have we

wandered from the marrow matter of our discourse? Neither for justice nor revenge only have my policies been stirred against the monks of Westminster. I have infinite other reasons wherefore to begin with their Abbey! It is the wealthiest and mightiest monastery in all England—it sets itself up as the champion and protector of the rest—and were Westminster once ours, all the others would offer but a plucking of ripe fruit in season. I purpose, then, to bring about its destruction, and to render it the fitter, Westminster has so grievously offended the Cardinal, that our work is already three parts done."

"Mean you that the Lord Legate purposes the destruction of the monasteries of England?" exclaimed Roodspere, with astonishment.

"Hist, man, speak low!—though indeed Thames only can be a-listening beneath these windows!" said Cromwel, sinking his own tones nevertheless to a whisper. "Hearken! I seek not to disguise from you, Master Roodspere, whom I take into all confidence, satisfied that you must see I am already deep as the bottom in yours—that the cardinal projects no such mighty overthrow as yet! He thinks only to frighten the Westminster monks into giving

up their dispossessed brethrens' cause, and yielding himself the sway in their monastery. He also hates their now prior, and is resolved he shall never be abbot, as the monks purpose when their present old man drops into the grave—whose time may be reckoned on the hour-glass. Rather he is determined to secure the election to himself. He will not succeed in this project—will go angry, and crush them all into the dust like pismires beneath an ox's tread! He who rolls a stone down a hill, cannot stop it where he will!"

"But what can I do in the matter, Master Cromwel? How serve your purposes?" said Roodspere.

"Like a terrier in a barn full of rats! You are to go among the Westminster monks as the Lord Legate's visitor, to search into the mystery of their iniquities, and furnish us with pithy reasons for what is to be done!" replied the secretary.

CHAPTER IX.

LILY VIRGIN.

> None but who saw (quoth he) would ween forsooth
> How shamefully that maid he did torment!
>
> SPENSER.

As Visitor to Westminster Abbey! Roodspere was greatly relieved when he heard this explanation of the purpose of his mysterious summons. Relieved from great anxiety on the score of the danger that might be involved in his own, to his friends and associates at Cambridge; and from a still more depressing sentiment—the Cardinal's conduct towards him no longer wore hues so unnatural and repulsive, but was explained to the more enlightened, and thence more indulgent, reason of the young reformer, by the superstition of the age and of the man. The affection and gratitude Wolsey had formerly inspired in him revived like the rich colours of a picture when a skilful hand has removed the dust and rust of time. He forgot for awhile his more

recent unfavourable impressions, and an emotion of filial tenderness flowed round his heart like a stream long checked, that finds again its wonted way. The office thus indicated was in congruity with his opinions and favourite objects of pursuit. Against monasticism — meaning by that word the whole constitution and foundations of the monachal system—all the views and efforts of the reformers were most vehemently enlisted. It was based on the two dogmas most earnestly repudiated and denounced by them—the belief in purgatory, and in the efficacy of men's works to obtain the remission of sins. The first of these credences in its practical workings, in the sale of the indulgences, and in the demoralization of the people, had been the very origin of Luther's resistance. The second was utterly opposed to the doctrines of men who ascribed all the hopes of human redemption to the expiation on the cross. The monasteries were still the mightiest strongholds of the papistical system, and covered Europe with fortresses of resistance and attack. Their destruction would also furnish the materials for the raising of those new structures of universal enlightenment and education which the scholarly enthusiasm of Roodspere had

always suggested to him as the most certain means to advance the cause he had embraced —lighthouses along the wreck-strewed and iron-bound coasts of the ancient superstitions which might guide remotest ages and nations into redemption!

The prospect of bringing to justice the possible perpetrators of the direful tragedy of Hunne—certainly his relentless persecutors—of probing the dark mystery of his fate to its depths — offered allurements to a natural curiosity and a sense of the retribution due for such enormities. Not to be thrown into collision with the Cardinal, and yet to be removed from any temptation or necessity of joining in his nefarious enterprises, were additional attractions to the service on which it seemed he was to be employed. His only reluctance was expressed in the few words with which he accompanied his acceptance of the office.

"It is no part of my disposition to play the spy and delator—to make myself the mouthpiece of men's ill-report! But the wages of sin are as surely due as those of eternal life! I will take the office, trusting also that therein I may find the means of opening a lantern in the darkness here too! So nigh the court—

so nigh the city! with so fair a pretext as the dispelling of the black fog of monkish ignorance settled over Westminster!—whence, could we expel the drones, as hath been done elsewhere, it might become a hive of learning and true wisdom unto all generations! Master secretary, I accept the office."

Cromwel smiled. "Put the wedge in any notch thou wilt, so it but rive the wood!" he said. "I wot well there is nothing like leather! You scholars are all for learning—well, no matter—there will be enow for all—let us not quarrel about the bearskin till we have caught the bear! We must engage men by their interests to maintain a new order of things; Machiaval says so—a ripe Italian wit and perfect master of all policy! You will do yourself, and those who have befriended you, infinite good by your success in this office. And in what regards the earthing of the foxes, I will take the chief part of the toil and care upon myself, for I have a better nose belike for ill scents. Meanwhile you will prove to the Cardinal, by your discreet handling of the affair, and obedience in your charge, how little cause he has to dread your horoscope."

"But deem you veritably we shall find reasonable justification for so great a measure

as the confiscation of a mitred abbey, in Westminster?" said Roodspere.

"If not, we must seek it—in the Cardinal's indignation!" returned Cromwel. "He is already enwrathed with them, as I have told you—and not lightly, which you may well opine when you shall hear the causes declared. Now, firstly, the monks of Westminster have been the most constant and earnest impugners of the powers vested in his grace by his legatine commission, and especially in the dissolving of the beggarly cells and endowments we have only as yet suppressed! They have allied themselves with my lord's worst enemies in the court—with Norfolk, Suffolk, and the Queen—so that we are mightily harassed in all our doings. They have roused the whole order of St. Benedict against us, and bring us daily into worse liking with the people, by their pestilent sermons and railing discourses. And, of all, their buckfaced saint is the prime leader and guide—the very heart and soul of the entire faction, which daily strengthens in its insolence and opposition. He has seen into our plans, and taught them their power of resistance! It is as if a herd of oxen, which the butcher was quietly driving to the slaughter-house, should suddenly become

aware of their doom, and of their bulky power of beef and thews, and turn with frenzied horns and roaring upon him! This rebellion hath also the rankling sting of ingratitude in it, for the Cardinal shielded their treasurer and his accomplices, to the great increase of his own unpopularity, and the ill-will of the Londoners, besides sustaining therein so rude a jolt in the king's favour that perchance he hath never since sate so rocky-fixed in it again! And, besides all this, they have grievously offended him in a point of sway and jurisdiction wherein he is infinitely absolute and resolved—in the disposal of one of his wards of the chancery!"

"Of the daughter of Sir Amias Paulet?" exclaimed Roodspere, with an eagerness that might have excited Cromwel's observation if he had not been very much interested in the subject himself.

"Ay, 'tis the common talk!—or have you taken special note of it, because the father was the man who, for your sake, put *your* father in the stocks?" said Cromwel, with a doubtful smile. "Truly, in this craft and misdoing of the monks, I also am in somewise a sufferer! You know that it is one of the king's royalties to give the custody of

the wards of his high Court of Chancery to whom he pleases—and the governance and care of a minor's estate is of good commodity and profit to us well—deserving lacklands and hangers-on of fortune in the court. Sir Amias Paulet's health being broken by his long dismal dwelling in the Sanctuary of Westminster, he died shortly after his release, in an unexpected suddenness, so that his daughter became a ward of the king's, in Chancery; which I understanding, made suit to his grace for the grant, and he being as liberal and condescending to those who serve him, as he is sharp and masterful to his oppugners, without more ado than asking conferred upon me. Now you are to understand it was my ill-hap to put her for her schooling in the nunnery of Clerkenwell, believing, as I had good cause, for a great service and redemption I had occasion to do to her of yore, that the prioress there was devoted to my will and interest. But gratitude hath a short memory, or greed stifled it—for, whatever my Lady Juliana pretends, she must needs have been all along aware of the artifices set afoot, shortly after his return from a long abode in the foreign schools of the same, by this Prior Sancgraal! She well knew I had good hopes

and purposes so to rear this youthful lady that, with the Cardinal's favour and furtherance, and my diligence in the care of her estate and person, I should in a manner entitle me to herself in marriage, as a reward, who am now something of a ripe bachelor, and weary of my joyless freedom celibiacal! Moreover, an alliance with so noble a name and the patrimony thence derived, would, methought, have set me on the first round of a preferment—which I think yet to achieve in spite of all the greasy-pated friars in the world! But lo ye, Clerkenwell Nunnery is a foundation and dependency of the Abbey of Westminster; and no sooner did this apish fellow come home—for be it known to you Prior Sancgraal affects the tricks of the old miracle-mongers to the life—than he took to meddling with everything; and among the rest, with my ward. All unknown to me, poor innocent! who was busied elsewhere, and suspected no such cuckoos in my nest, he got to persuade Mistress Paulet that the only mean to work her own salvation, and redeem her father's soul from the penalties in which he wrought upon her to believe he died, was to become a votaress of our Lady of the Assumption. And she, being a milky,

blue-eyed simpleton, believed him, and grew to fancy she had a special call to dedicate herself to the life of a frog in a well! At last she was emboldened by her advisers to declare as much to me—who, you may believe, utterly denied my consent. But, in scorn of my refusal, the nuns openly permitted her to assume the white veil of probation; and, with a marvellous obstinacy and boldness in one so weak and wontedly meek, she avouched to me her firm resolve to put on the black one as soon as she could obtain her superior's permission to that effect. Finding no better could be done, and that her confessor, Sancgraal, worked her as the mere puppet of his will, I laid my just complaint before the Cardinal, who, siding with me as a good lord should by his vassal, ordered the damsel to be brought before him, that by the awe of his person and authority, he might exorcise her contradictious demon, and win her to a submission. But, Diavolo! as the Italian says, I know not what tricks of persuasion they had taught her; but after he had seen and conversed with her, of a sudden the Cardinal took part against me, and would have me to believe that she was driven to her course by dislike and fear of my wooing. Wherefore I was commanded

to cease it utterly, and to give her assurance of the same; after which, he said, he doubted not to bring her to a more reasonable judgment; and his grace was pleased to add that it was great folly and presumption in a man so lowly born as, without doubt, I am—having only a woman for a mother!—to aspire to so noble an alliance. Howbeit, his grace, I sometimes think, means her a greater shame—if shame went ever in purple and fine linen, and under cloths of estate! Why do you stare at me with such widening eyes, fair clerk?"

"How mean you, sir? That the Lord Legate could project aught against the innocence of this helpless girl?" said Roodspere, with a look of horror that in turn alarmed Cromwel.

"I say not so—I know not so—I know nothing. His grace takes me not into his counsels, you may believe, in this matter!" replied Cromwel. "It may be that the Cardinal only projects, by letting her see the extremity of earthly glory and delights—by kind blandishments, and arguments which women can understand—in the shape of glistering silks and ornaments—to wean her from her folly! I am no jealous lover to

suspect other! But if so I am fairly avenged on the monks—and, moreover, I have put into the Cardinal's head a firm resolve that whenever Abbot Islip dies, himself, and none other, shall be his successor in Westminster. This is his project—ours must be to drive him on crushing the monkery by its ill success—which is certain, for they are possessed with a notion that Sancgraal was born to their redemption, for that a lying-in woman, gone delirious, followed a dream to the shrine of St. Edward, and whelped him there!"

"Heaven, in good sooth, must be aweary of the system whereof these men and their deeds are the true spawn!" said Roodspere, with a profound sigh. "But do you, indeed, suspect this man—these monks of Westminster—of being so much other than they seem?"

"Do I suspect the devil to be black, though he wear a surplice of snow?" returned Cromwel, with vehemence. "I will tell you more anon! —The monks of Westminster may keep their sepulchre better whited than the rest, having an abbot who is too old to gainsay, and a prior and treasurer who are aware of what the times demand; one of whom would have men deem him a saint, and the other is one, if fastings and whippings, and prayers and dotage can

make a man so without the pope's patent! Ay, but this Sancgraal himself! I cannot bring myself to believe that a monk, educated in all the luxury and crapulence of a mitred abbey, can be a saint! Look at his sensual and passion-seething countenance, with all its mock humility! List to the tone of his discourses, more resembling a jongleur's lays than a sober priest's! Almoner Benson tells me strange stories, too, of his gloomy and rebellious youth—of the merciless training bestowed upon him by Gislebert, which might well fashion a hypocrite very difficult to detect — but one indeed! His pride and malice and savage melancholy which won him, even in childhood, the title of Brother Lucifer, much more than his devil's hoof!— strange tales of him in his hermitage, averring that there he studied magic under cover of acquiring skill in medicine—and medicine, that he might make the people imagine he also hath the gift of healing! And when old Gislebert was imprisoned, they say, he took his full share in the disorders and misrule that ensued in the abbey; insomuch that he was sent on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and to study in the foreign universities, that men might have time to forget the interlude

in his sanctity. In brief, Hunne's suspicions are never well out of my mind—and I doubt whether we know the worst of him yet, or by what manner of spells he has wrought upon this foolish novice of ours, against all rhyme and reason, to dedicate herself in his nunnery of Clerkenwell! But my Lord Cardinal will doubtless screw the truth out of her to-day—even women's craft were scarce a match for his! Why do you change colour, Master Roodspere? Out upon me to forget how hurriedly you have complied with my post-scriptum, and how much you must need refreshment and rest! Well then, since my lord is so busy swan-hopping to-day, we will abide his leisure, and dine at the comptroller's table. But how is this? Why have you not donned your doctor's violet robes?"

Roodspere, thinking of far other things, rallied sufficiently to confess, with some little reluctance, that he had no better array in which to present himself than that he wore. Something he spoke of his hurried departure—and then, in a braver spirit, he acknowledged his poverty, and was silent.

"This is not well!" said Cromwel, thoughtfully. "For so wise a man, the Cardinal is a very woman in his eye for fine garniture! And

yet it is well! It will vex his grace to the heart to see how poorly you are kept, by Gardiner's procurement—and nature has furnished you with a choicer suit than tailors can fashion. Come with me now—we have no other business here."

Roodspere could devise no plausible pretext to remain; yet he felt an extreme reluctance to quit the gallery. All he had heard increased his dread for the safety of the daughter of Sir Amias Paulet, and it seemed to him as if he were withdrawing some appointed protection from her, as he slowly followed in Cromwel's steps. So strongly did this notion work upon him that an irresistible power appeared to check his steps as he passed the door opening to the inner chambers of the palace—and to compel him to halt before that of Wolsey's oratory.

"What is the matter? Why stare you so planet-struck?" said Cromwel.

"Hush! do you not hear voices, master secretary? A woman's voice in lamenting beseeching?" exclaimed Roodspere, turning deadly pale.

"In the Cardinal's oratory? Not I, indeed!"

"Listen then!"

And a female voice could then be distinctly heard, in raised and affrighted accents—the voice of the daughter of Sir Amias Paulet—proceeding from the chamber.

"Let me forth, let me forth! I will tarry no longer with thee, wicked Cardinal! This is no holy shriving!—I will say no more, nor hear! I hate thee and all thy pomp and riches worse than the fiend and his fiery claws! I will go to our mother and my sisters! Let me forth, in our blissful Lady's name, or I will make such an outcry as shall summon the whole world to witness how unlike a priest and holy churchman you do entreat me here!" These were the words.

"Peace, foolish girl!—like all thy race, of evil and undutiful tongue!—whom canst thou summon in this palace that will dare to cross my will? Yea, or throughout the land of England?" returned the loud and imperious—else it could not have been so distinctly overheard—and yet agitated voice of Wolsey. "Peace! or I will stifle thy causeless clamours in a strange sort!—What ails thee, sweet simpleton, to be so scared? What have I done to thee? I might not refrain! Were thy cheeks the fruit of Paradise that lured to perdition, I must needs have devoured after

savouring their sweetness!—Give me my kisses back again, if they displease thee.—I have other uses for my gifts than to bestow them on those who show themselves ungrateful even in the receiving! But, nay, let them nestle in thy snowy sweetness here—they are but the billings of a loving bird! What doth the harmless bee in the lily's bosom, thy namesake, but gather sweets?—How, pretty heretic, darest thou be disobedient unto us, our lord the pope's vicar?"

"My gracious lord!—you wot well, I have a peculiar call—I am betrothed to Him who is thy lord as well as mine! I hate the glare of the world, and all its pomps and vanities! Only by my dedication can I redeem my father's soul from purgatory—mayhap from eternal fires! Your sternness drove him thither! for how could he believe.—I pray you pardon me, my lord!—but I do oft see him in very frightful dreams, wandering like a shape of fire through the black mists of hell, and shrieking to me to have mercy upon him and redeem his forfeit soul!" replied those affrighted tones. The answer was in a lower but eager and impassioned utterance, which only the sense of

hearing strained to the uttermost could have caught.

"What have these mad monks put into her head?—Sweet child! I have plenary powers.—I will set thy father free from all penalties, if thou wilt love me as I love thee! Yea, boundlessly much I love thee, my little panting goldfinch! Dost thou not see how bright a cage I have prepared for my delight? Wilt thou not, then, tarry in it, and sing 'Sweet, sweet, sweet,' for evermore with him who, for very love, has stolen his gentle bird's nest, and brought it hither home? Or dost thou doubt, my lily, that I should fail in my promises—yea, and a thousand fold their fulfilling—when thou art mine? Dost thou think I could joy to go to my supremacy in Rome so lonely and all-abandoned by those I love? No, I would go like the flowering oak, covered with my blossoms, that men may know it is no aged stem, but the sire of a forest that is transplanted thither!—Nay, an thou doubt me, put me to my oath, and, all respects laid aside, I will swear till thou believe!"

"I need no oaths—you do affright me, my lord! Let me go, o'God's name, and I will not be so peremptory to take on me our lady's

weed, until you give me fair leave!" returned the affrighted girl.

"Hear you now, Master Cromwel?" muttered Roodspere, in a low hoarse whisper.

"What is to be heard? What ails you, sir? The Cardinal is mad!—He would but bring this obstinate girl to a fitting obedience," said the secretary, who was nevertheless extremely agitated.

"Ay, truly! Of old, he used craft; hath his unmastered villany passed on now to violence?" returned the same husky tones.

"That is something to promise; but, sweet, you must show your obedience more perfectly —by consenting to abide in my palace henceforth!—I am the king's master of the wards, and you may well do so without scandal or offence; and you will stay with one, sweet thing, who is the master of England, but who —but who worships thee thus!" returned Wolsey, in fond and cajoling tones that sickened Roodspere's inmost heart.

"I will not, I will not! I will rather go to my father's grave, whither you sent him long before his time, cruel Cardinal, with all his compelled sins upon his head!" was the vehement rejoinder—suddenly changed into tones of terror and entreaty. "But approach me

not, I say! or I will shriek so loudly that the angels of heaven shall come to mine aid, if none of your base vassalage dares! Help, mother of God! *O alma redemptoris mater*, help!"

A fist, clenched like a knob of steel, thundering rather than rapping at the exterior of the oratory door, responded to this appeal

"The Cardinal is mad! but are you madder still?" exclaimed Cromwel.

"Open the door! What evil is at work within here? Open, or I summon the Cardinal's guard!" cried a voice, fraught with the dismal undertones of the coming hurricane.

"Well bethought of! Feign that you think the Cardinal himself in danger?" whispered Cromwel.

"Who is there? Who dares to intrude upon my privacy? I am the Cardinal of York—All is well—begone!" returned the haughty and imperious tones of Wolsey.

"All is not well! Who calls within? What is ado? No Cardinal of York would fright a woman into these outcries!" retorted the unwelcome summoner.

"No, no, good sir! kind voice!—I am evil entreated here! Take me forth, in our

sweet mother's name, ever a virgin! Of her mercy, save me that am her votaress, and Sir Amias Paulet's daughter, in infinite danger of mine honour from this false—" But the outcry was suddenly stifled, as if by some violent means, for a noise of struggling and of suppressed shrieks was audible within.

"Open the door, Cardinal! or I will batter it down, and make your own slaves the witnesses of your vileness!" returned the scarcely articulate tones of Roodspere, after renewed thunder of rappings at the door.

"Why who art thou that dar'st to make question with us? I am Wolsey, the Cardinal! As thou wouldst shun my consuming wrath, depart!" said the lordly voice within.

"Oh, it is he; it is he! he is still here! Help, gentle clerk! A wolf ravens me in this den! Oh, as thou didst boast thyself erewhile my father's true vassal, defend his daughter now! She is in danger of her honour, and so of her life!" burst in half-choked intervals from the lips of the bewrayed daughter of Sir Amias Paulet.

"Nay, then, I must make me a way to the rescue!" returned Roodspere, rending at the door of the oratory with a frenzied violence, that seemed likely enough to effect its object.

"My lord, my lord! Open, I beseech you! Here are sudden news—unexpected despatches from Rome which demand instant expedition!" interposed Cromwel, restraining by main force, though with difficulty, this violent onset.

"What is the matter, Cromwel?—Peace, obstinate fool, if thou wouldst not.—Thou shalt be let forth, Lily—Lily mine! Be but calm and patient, silly girl! I meant no such folly as thou dost image thee in thy girlish simplicity! Thou shalt return to thy convent if—peace, peace, I say! What are the news, Cromwel, that make such assault and battery of haste at our doors? Seest thou, simpleton? I will let thee forth!" said Wolsey, in broken and exceedingly agitated tones; and finding no better could be done to silence the importunate clamour without, and within, he unbolted the door of the oratory, opened it, and stepped forth with a lofty and majestic stride, endeavouring to close the door of the chamber after him. This movement brought him face to face, and almost breast to breast, with the unretiring personage of Raphael Roodspere—and of a sudden the Cardinal waxed lividly pale as a condemned criminal, and staggered back, like a man struck by some powerful physical blow! The oratory door,

abandoned in this shock of feeling, flew back, and the novice glided cowering out like a bird, fluttering and almost expiring from its capturer's rude hands. She had, indeed, scarcely strength left to totter up to Roodspere, and murmur, "Save me, save me from worse than death!" ere she fainted in the arms that were extended compassionately and lovingly as its nest receives the throbbing fugitive back again.

"Yea, to the death!—poor orphan, yea!—against the whole world in arms!"

There was a pause—a frightful pause—such as precedes the commencement of some great strife, when the dread concentration of men's thoughts and energies allows of no attempt at utterance—scarcely to draw the breath of life! During this pause the father and son gazed at each other stedfastly and in utter silence.

Wolsey stood on the threshold of his oratory, which had witnessed the incubation of so many of his dark and dangerous policies, fixed as a statue—and with very much the look of one, for the dark beads of agitation that ran down his visage might have been taken for the dews on some sepulchral marble, in an antique Gothic aisle. But the chamber whence he had

emerged rather resembled the cave of some Eastern genie, blazing with a sunglow of jewels and gold, than the devote retirement of an ecclesiastic of the west. So dazzling was the effect of the cloth-of-gold with which it was hung, its stained windows, and gorgeous furniture, that, if an oratory, it seemed as if only emperors and kings were worthy to pray in it. But an altar there visibly was within, covered with ornaments of beaten gold, surrounded by blazing tapers, that burned daylight—censers were still smoking with rich perfumes on its steps—magnificently bound massbooks and other necessaries for the ceremonial worship which, at all events, Wolsey never neglected, were profusely scattered about. And in his person and array, the master of all this grandeur did it no discredit. Wolsey was a man of good, though not of lofty stature, with a countenance that, but for the traces of advancing years, and a slight defect in the vision of one of the eyes, might have been pronounced eminently handsome, and of a princely dignity and graciousness. He wore the crimson robe of a cardinal, buttoned down the cape with large rubies, over skirts of gold lace; beneath which his feet, in slippers of the precious metal polished,

seemed already to claim the pontifical honours of osculation; and his broad hat was ribanded with diamonds of extraordinary lustre. Such was the imposing and magnificent personage who now quailed beneath the rebuking and yet mournful gaze of an ill-clad, poverty-stricken student—a young and all-unfriended stranger!

"Why, Cromwel, how is this?—*who* is this?" gasped the Cardinal at last.

"I am one Raphael Roodspere, my Lord Cardinal of York!—a priest, and therefore bound to protect innocence; a man, and therefore to protect the honour of a woman and an orphan!—vassal-born of the Lords of Hinton, and therefore bound to protect their daughter with my life!—The which I will even to my last gasp, if the fiend you serve shall put it into your heart to spill this your unlawful blood in my veins!" was the awful response.

"Hopkins was a true soothsayer!—or do I dream?" said Wolsey, staring with something of incredulity at the vehement speaker. "So! thou art returned to my house—an untaught prodigal—to shame and blacken me before mankind, and make a foolish cloistress's vanity and silly fears credible in the tale!"

"No, my lord Cardinal; say rather I have

returned to save you from a deadlier sin than any you have yet committed, in the destruction of this holy innocent's most precious dower from heaven!" replied Roodspere, and his tones were calm with excess of emotion.

"Roodspere, it is not so! Master doctor, it is false, utterly false!" said Wolsey, somewhat regaining his self-possession. "I do appeal to herself; her senses have returned methinks, or it was but one of her sex's wonted artifices to win compassion by feigning to lose them! She is my ward and penitent, and I was but needfully examining her conscience to discover the causes of her most irreligious disobedience, when—"

"No, gentle clerk! no, I am not his grace's penitent—Prior Sancgraal is my confessor—a most holy and religious man!" sobbed Lily Virgin, reviving, but still bewildered, from her trance. "Prior Sancgraal has coffers full of gold that he values not; he will reward you most lavishly, if you will save me from this man! And I have gold, too, of mine inheritance, fair scholar!—I will give all to depart hence unscathed!"

"Ay, Prior Sancgraal! Prior Sancgraal!" repeated Wolsey, disorderedly. "Master Roodspere! I would but have discovered by

what artifices that audacious monk has corrupted all virtue of obedience in this unhappy child!—I doubt, I doubt the worst! For all his fair seemings, I doubt, I doubt he has abused the powers he hath usurped over her to her utter ruin! How else hath he obtained to render so young and else gentle and submissive a creature, so obstinately rebellious as to refuse to confess to me, who stand in our holy father the Pope's very person to her?"

"Ah, wicked Cardinal!—It was not so, gentle clerk!" said Lily Virgin, quickened into vehement life by indignation. "This false priest did rather kneel, as he said, in confession unto me; professed an unholy love for me—a love which no man of God, under his damnation, may cherish for any woman creature!—feigned that he had hung his chambers with silver and gold and costly tapestries for me alone; and would have had me tarry in them with the Seven Deadly Sins that do ever haunt in his company, and become his shameful leman and love! And then he promised that I should share all his wealth and power in England; should go with him anon to Italy, the which he says is the very paradise of the earth, to reign with him over kings and princes there! Yea, and to make most foul seem fair,

he promised to wed me to some courteous gentleman of his house, who would give me a fair title of wifehood, and ask only my lord's favour for his pains!"

"The girl is mad! or rather she inherits her father's slanderous tongue!—She foully belies me, Master Roodspere!—She is of the faction of the monks, and of the devil-clawed jackal of the Abbey! He has put her on this leasing; or her own vain supposal; or, to speak God's truth," said Wolsey, in extreme confusion, "if I did put these solicitations on her, I did it but to sound her—to ascertain me if the pestiferous monk had won her by promises to share the state he hopes for himself, as the wealthy and mitred abbot which he shall never be! I did outbid his farthest wildness, to know if it were thus; and the bedazzled simpleton takes all in earnest! Let her return then to her paltry convent, and dower it with a beggared inheritance—for such her father's folly left it to her, and my good tilth and husbandry are not to be taken into the account!—Go, silly wench, to your gloomy cloister, go! You will live to lament the day when you gave up all the delights of earth for—no matter; time brings wisdom; but as late as flowers to the dead! And look,

on pain of the curse and ban of the church, that you repeat not your slanders and most false imaginings in any other ears! Even beneath this golden palace of our state we have places of rebuke for such as merit it, where the sun hath forgotten his way for aye! Return to Dame Juliana and your sisters at the banquet! I will make no further means to save you from their crafty enticements, and Prior Sancgraal's sortilege."

"Nay, my lord Cardinal, it were fitter that she left the palace and returned to her nunnery at once! — Ill tongues have already discoursed of her presence herein," said Roodspere, in tones of steely determination, that exercised a singular influence even over the mighty master of the mansion.

"Why, let her go, I care not! Cromwel, go and see her forth with the rest of her undutiful sisterhood, administering such sharp rebukes to my lady prioress as you may well remember and perceive she has deserved!" he said, yet resuming as much of his customary stateliness of supremacy as he could rally. Cromwel readily advanced, in hopes to conclude the perilous debate, but Lily Virgin shrunk from him with an expression of almost equal alarm as from the cardinal. "No, no,

I will trust me only to this gentle clerk! He is my father's vassal—he will not betray me!" she exclaimed, clinging with childlike implicitness and confidence to Roodspere, who, much affected, took her hand and murmured, "I will not desert you, lady—I will see you safely forth or meet my doom upon the way!"

"Let it be so—lead to the privy chambers, Cromwel — my business with Master Roodspere can be despatched on his return, which I will tarry here!" said Wolsey, throwing himself into a richly gilt arm-chair with a bitter and dissatisfied laugh, but with a gesture which Cromwel thought it best to accept as a command. Accordingly he threw open the door of the neighbouring corridor, and hastily drew Roodspere into it with the trembling novice hanging on his arm.

With the swiftness and something of the confusion of the passage of events in a dream —pouring a torrent of soothing and tender expressions which he had not known till now were at his command—Roodspere followed in the rapid wake of the secretary. He noticed little of the splendid series of apartments they traversed, the Venetian mirrors, the superb tapestry; the sideboards covered with rich plate, and the floors with the then almost unknown

luxury of carpets, or polished to a mirror-like brightness in costly woods. He observed only the flushed and tearful visage of the novice, listened only to her musical murmurs of gratitude and trust—in which there was but one jar—the frequent iteration of the name of the Prior of Westminster, as a party to the sentiments thus sweetly expressed. In this manner they entered the magnificent banqueting chamber of the privy chambers, where the nuns of Clerkenwell and their prioress were seated at a sumptuous dessert. The viands were, however, untouched, as if they awaited some superior presence; but all save Sister Barbara were joyously laughing at some jest of the Cardinal's fool, who was evidently engaged in his office of mirth-making. Mark Smeaton, the musician, was also there, with what would in modern times be called his band, seated in a low gallery that ran round the chamber—also seeming to await some great arrival to recommence his harmony.

The sudden apparition of Cromwel, followed by so unexpected a group, created an immediate sensation. Dame Juliana seemed especially alarmed, and arose with an appearance of the most fluttered consternation as soon as she espied the secretary. Reason

good was speedily afforded in the severe speech which the latter launched at her. "So, madam, you have done as I so oft warned you in vain you would, and completed the measure of his grace's indignation! who commands that you all instantly depart with your rebellious novice, and never again venture in his sight till ye are prepared with an utter submission to win pardon for the past."

"All honour and laud to our blessed Lady of Sorrows! My prayers are heard!" said Sister Barbara with edifying solemnity.

"Master Cromwel, I am in no wise to blame! My sisters disdain all counsel and subjection!" exclaimed the prioress with visible agitation.

"Natheless you must bear the blame of whatsoever turns amiss! High place hath that pinch in his golden shoe, which we also are bounden in much sufferance to know," said Cromwel, sharply — concluding more benignantly. "But now leave the palace in peace—and mayhap you will hear no more, till you offend worse, of this unpleasing matter."

"What, is his grace reconciled—or hath our sweet child seen what folly it is to desire to be one of us, poor, wailing, peevish, discon-

tented prisoners?" responded Dame Juliana, with a glance of amazed query at the pair before her.

"She is forbidden under no less a forfeit than excommunication, to declare what has passed—or ye to question her!" said Cromwel, impressively. "Meanwhile his grace would have ye gone, for let me tell you, lady prioress, *your* visitation to a lone clergyman, as well ye wot, may give scandalous tongues leave to talk! This young clerk and I will see you to the gates; after which we have pressing business waits us back again."

This hint was not of a nature to be misunderstood; and the prioress, deeply colouring at the included hint, prepared to obey. "'Tis a pity, by my fay, madam," said the jester, with a whine that seemed natural to his tones. "I am in as rare fooling this noonday as if it were yuletide, and every man had his full of the berry-brown! Yet there is no help for it—good company must part—unless ye will take me with ye, and make supposal of a devout chaplain in me for awhile!"

"And rarely of a suit, fool!" said Cromwel, with asperity. "Nay, Master Roodspere, let the mother of the novices lead this damsel of ours—I promise ye, sister Barbara is fitted to

be dame superior to the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne! And now lead on: what is too choice a dainty for the master, is surely too good for the man!"

The procession was by this time marshalled, and the nuns quitted the splendid saloon in which they had been entertained, to what sounded, even in their ears, like a mocking as well as revellous march, from Smeaton and his musicians in concert.

CHAPTER X.

THE OLD CHURCH AND THE NEW.

Exceeding wise, fairspoken, and persuading.
SHAKESPERE.

There, as in glist'ring glory she did sit,
She held a great gold chain, ylinked well,
Whose upper end to highest Heaven was knit,
And lower part did reach to lowest hell!
SPENSER.

LILY-VIRGIN, trembling in every fibre, seemed to have but one object—to preserve but one recollection—and hurried Sister Barbara's stiff but not unwilling frame into an unwonted jolt of exertion, in hastening out of those dangerous walls. Roodspere shared her impatience, doubting even yet of her safety, and indifferent to every other consideration. He did not even hear, much less attend to, the exclamations and questionings of Dame Juliana—and never had the open sky appeared so beautiful a spectacle to him as when he now emerged into a courtyard of the palace beneath it. This also belonged to the Cardinal's pri-

vate suite of chambers; and here the nuns, according to their superioress, had left their equipage. It was evident they were intended to make a longer stay than they had made, for no vehicle of any sort was visible. Cromwel's imperious summons, however, speedily brought some attendants from a neighbouring lodge, with whom the rustic yeomen who escorted the nuns of Clerkenwell were engaged in what was evidently a wassail pottle-deep. The tone of his commands banished all ideas of revelry here also, and produced from the stables, in extraordinarily brief time, a team of large Flanders horses, drawing a long wagon, on wheels painted blue and crimson, covered with a silk awning on gilded poles, hung with curtains, and cushioned with wisps of fine white straw, which composed what was called a chariot in those days, and was considered a proper equipage for ladies of rank and consideration like the nuns of Clerkenwell.

Into this vehicle Lily-Virgin made such haste to enter that she even forgot her usual humility and deference to the Lady Superior, and took the precedence so hurriedly that she stumbled on the wheel as she mounted its double spokes, which were the only steps. But again the guardian hand of Roodspere and

his watchful diligence preserved her from the injury that might have ensued. While thus aiding her to climb the carriage he noticed, for the first time, with an inexpressible depth of indignation, the disorder of her hair and of the white folds that covered her fairer neck and bosom. She seemed, indeed, like a snowy dove that had escaped from the hawk's rifling, with the marks of the ravager's beak in all its torn plumage and palpitating frame! And now, also, for the first time, as it seemed, the agitated fugitive remembered that the escape she had effected involved a frightful amount of risk to her generous deliverer. She clasped Roodspere's aiding hand wildly, perhaps scarce consciously, in both her own, and exclaimed, "Oh, thankless wretch that I am!—to forget how the cruel Cardinal will visit all his vengeance upon you, gentle clerk!—Come with us, come with us—we shall then all be saved together! Dear Lady Mother, he has saved me—he has saved me—alas, I may not say from what vileness!—but let him have refuge in our house, and go with us thither even now!—or it were better, oh, yes, it were better, if, dearest sir, you took sanctuary in Westminster, where Prior Sancgraal will, for my sake, maintain you against all harm and

seizure, dearer than were you of his own heart's blood and lineage!"

"Our poor house is truly bound by its rule to use hospitality—and specially to all clerical wayfarers—you shall be very welcome, sir, if—but, my child, cover yourself!—see you not in what disarray your giddy haste has thrown you!" said Dame Juliana.

Blushing the rosiest tint of virgin modesty, the young novice abandoned her hold of Roodspere's hand, and cowering into her bosom hastily drew her dishevelled hair and robes around her—well assisted by the trembling and bony but very zealous hands of Sister Barbara. It might have been a nymph of Diana, surprised bathing, who drew the very waters around her in her fright!

"Hillo, Dame Juliana! would you set your fingers a-bleeding again with sweet-briars?" interposed Cromwel, sternly. "And for Prior Sancgraal and Westminster, trust me, they will see this young canonist sooner than they need desire!—Meanwhile, Mistress Paulet, lay by this silly fear with the rest—Master Roodspere is of so near parentel to my lord, that Abraham and Ishmael were of the like, if the old king of sheep and camels had sent for his lad home instead of turning him adrift in the desert!"

Roodspere's pale countenance caught the flame of the painful emotion that continued to glow in Lily-Virgin's sweet face—while the prioress looked at him with intensely eager curiosity. But at this moment Master Cavendish joined the group, bearing also marks of the agitated state of feeling which seemed to have spread in the palace, having, in fact, all the appearance of a man who had received a severe rating. The gentleman-usher brought word that his grace required the immediate presence of Master Roodspere and his secretary, having other very pressing business abroad, and Cromwel, with scant courtesy, hurried the prioress and the rest of the nuns into their chariot. Tears continued to flow in uncounted pearls down Lily-Virgin's cheeks; but the impatient secretary even rudely interrupted the final farewell she exchanged with her rescuer, by giving a signal to the yeomen wagoners to drive on, and in a few instants the whole huge vehicle rumbled out of the yard.

"And now, come, master scholar, most immediately to his grace! He seemed in a manner moonstruck when he heard how long delay had been already made while you were waiting in the gallery! Your business must

have a hot spur in it, and be of great moment, since my lord ordains that on no account should you quit the palace till he has spoken with you?" said Cavendish, with perhaps a delicate and discreet feel to ascertain what this wonderful business might be.

"We are coming! Cheer up, Master Roodspere—well handled, there is nothing to fear in this business! Never saw I any man—I doubt if any angel might either—who exercised a stranger magic on the Cardinal than you! Your genius rebukes his—you are the young Octavius to our Mark Antony!" whispered Cromwel, adding, in a still lower and more emphatic tone, "O' God's name, muster your spirits, and by some apt submission bring us out of this strait! If not, we are all lost—thy friends at Cambridge, too! Did not Bilney tell thee how the devilish prior there harried him in his examinations in the chapter-house of Westminster—and will you not harry him in turn? Courage! or we shall have more need of it anon."

"I fear nothing, Master Cromwel!—nothing for myself—yet I have more cause than you deem of," replied Roodspere, who had now little doubt that Wolsey's new apprehensions were excited by the discovery that his discourse

with the king's confessor might have been overheard. "Let us on: I am ready and equal now to any fate!"

Cromwel liked not the ominous serenitude of this reply; but he felt the danger of pressing for explanations before Cavendish, and from a man whose imprudence he had so lately and signally witnessed. Meanwhile, he saw with alarm that an impression of some sternly fixed determination settled over Roodspere's visage, and he uneasily concluded in his secret mind—what was in reality the case—that his intended coadjutor was entirely disgusted with the situation in which he found himself, and resolved to decline all personal furtherance of the plans he had himself so elaborately matured. Engaged in these unpleasant cogitations, he now followed rather than led the scholar back to the Cardinal's oratory, without proffering another word.

They found the prelate still seated in his rich chair of state, his feet crossed with an affectation of carelessness on a crimson velvet stool; apparently engaged in the perusal of a parchment of considerable length, engrossed in the usual form of a legal document. It seemed as if he was absorbed in this perusal; but while pretending to read it with so much attention, a

frown of peculiar sternness compressed his brows; his colour changed repeatedly, and he gnawed his nether lip with something of the irrepressible agitation of an offender who suspects his secret malpractices betrayed to light. On the contrary, Roodspere was extremely calm, and awaited with an apparently unblenching composure until the Cardinal should think proper to acknowledge the fact of his return, eyeing him without audacity or insult, but at the same time with perfect firmness. Indeed his feelings were rather those of compassion and sorrow over a nature meant for so much nobler uses, now so steeped in the mire of iniquities—once that had almost seemed to him of godlike qualities and supremacy!

It was several minutes before Wolsey, affecting to be absorbed in his perusal, could sufficiently master the emotions doubtless contending in his mind, to speak in the tone he desired to assume. Pride, shame, fear, perhaps some tinge of not entirely obliterated tenderness, and consciousness of wrong-doing and injury towards his neglected offspring—were at struggle in those close lists where conscience sits as supreme arbiter. Cromwel had twice murmured to Roodspere, "Kneel at his grace's footstool!" without producing any

effect, when the Cardinal at last spoke—yet still without looking from his interesting document. "So, master doctor! you have made good diligence in sooth!—we hear you have been for some time biding ours in the great gallery?" he observed, in tones that, in spite of every effort, faltered.

"Yea, my lord," replied Roodspere, in a voice so calmly resolute that Wolsey involuntarily started, and glanced at him with an expression —yes, an expression of fear! He even shrunk somewhat back in his chair, and drew in his outstretched limbs as if to be ready for flight! But after an instant's recollection, the blood returned to his temples, and he observed rather hurriedly and unconnectedly. "How like you the pictures in my tapestries there? Noted you the one *nearest my oratory here*, where Sir Paris and Lady Helena of Greece are sitting at their love-play, while the wine-heavy husband snores over his cups? Madame Louisa, the French king's mother, gave it me, and though she swore by her troth she would not have parted with it to ransom her grandson, the dauphin, from Spain, yet she might not rest content till I accepted it! What deem you of the work? Is it not a sight to set a young clerk's thoughts a-wandering?" And

now he looked with an agitated but keenly scrutinizing gaze at Roodspere.

"It may well be, my lord, if all be true that men report of the French tastes in such unfit fantasies—but if so, I marked it not: my mind was elsewhere, and the tapestries in your great gallery may be as perplexed silkwork as the worms themselves could have spun for aught that I noted or remember," replied Roodspere, and with perfect truth, with a steady sobriety of tone which somewhat reassured his questioner.

"How might you pass so long time then without weariness, as you must needs until—until that foolish girl, schooled by the dry-boned skeleton who calls herself mother of the novices of Clerkenwell—or perversely mistaking our purpose, which is most likely—how passed you the tedious time, I say, until we summoned you to our oratory to appease her frantic outcry?"

Very luckily Cromwel hastened to reply to this question, imagining only that Wolsey apprehended more of his dialogue with his recalcitrant penitent had been overheard than he could remember with satisfaction might have reached the ears of a third party. "Sir, Master Roodspere was with me in the Bull's-

eye, where I was labouring to save your grace some trouble by expounding to him the particulars of the service you expect from him in Westminster."

"Soh!" exclaimed the Cardinal, the clouds somewhat dispersing on his brows. "But how chanced it then that neither of ye did us any reverence — not to say the knee-homage we might claim as our holy father the pope's representative, when of late we saw our brother, the Bishop of Lincoln, through the gallery? For we had but just begun our examining of the conscience of that simple wench when she took the like fright as if we had purposed to question her on the rack!"

"My lord, as God is my witness, we saw you not, nor heard you! We saw only the silver-backed dolphins of the Thames, and listened only to one another's prate, until we heard your grace—call for assistance!" replied Cromwel with energy; but scarcely himself able to refrain from laughter at this conclusion.

"Go to, then, Thomas; we are indeed too much the slave of mad Hopkins's illboding phantasy! the which, young doctor, we trust your services will speedily banish for ever, like a scaring night dream, from our mind!—Approach, for we would speak in all confidence on

a prime business with you!" said Wolsey, himself slightly smiling, till he marked the unmoved gravity of Roodspere's countenance.

"Kneel at his grace's footstool!" whispered Cromwel for the third time—and for the third time in vain.

"We would have you lose no time in its despatch!" continued Wolsey, yet evidently embarrassed. "A diligent execution of the behests of our sometime lord, King Henry VII., was the foundation of all our own towering fortunes! We would have you to lose no time lest the monks of Westminster should have space given them to devise some means of opposition—wherein they are very apt—though we scarcely deem they will dare to fall on any personal to our authority—but they have a cacodæmon for a prior who can see, they say, through stone walls!"

"My lord, I have thought more ripely on my unfitness since I spoke with Master Cromwel," said Roodspere, with extreme coldness. "I am not skilled in any rule of the cowled madmen who first penned men up in monasteries—and to be set up as a scarecrow among carrion birds were to me small honour—at all events a preferment which I covet not in anywise!"

"You are right were it meant as such—or

in any manner as matching your merits, or my purposes to reward them," returned Wolsey—after a moment's pause of surprise. "You go to Westminster, Master Roodspere—not to restore the rule of St. Benedict among those besotted monks, but to make yourself—in the end—its wealthy and mighty abbot! It has always been my intent, since ever I formed my resolve on the subject, to make myself abbot there only as it were for awhile, *in commendam* until such season as I could find a worthy substitute who would aid me in the great plan I have formed to save the Church by an internal renovation, beginning with the cleansing of these Augean stables of the monasteries! Why else have you preached so bitterly against the ignorance and lewdness of the monks in Cambridge, if you will not aid us in the work in Westminster? And for your reward you shall be made our inheritor in that lordly spirituality when we are called hence to heavier labours beyond sea—which our father, the Pope's captivity, may impose upon us! We owe thee some benevolence and promotion, we freely acknowledge, Roodspere!—and it were then but to lop those flowing locks of thine, and don the black robe of St. Benedict, to make thee the richest and stateliest as well as learnedest

prelate that for many a-day hath worn the scapulary white!"

"My lord, it is impossible—my policy, my hopes, my resolves, tend only to the perpetual destruction and extirpation of those locust devastators!" returned Roodspere.

"Well, that time may come! The wise shipman will oft lighten his barque in a storm by casting overboard his most precious wares—whereas these monks are neither cargo nor ballast," said Wolsey, with unexpected assentingness. "But the way to Rome must be paved with gold—and I go thither, Master Roodspere! Westminster is rich—and must be mine; or, if not—rather than it shall be this Prior Sancgraal's, I will divide it in fritterlings among Boleyns and Howards!—I spoke not lightly erewhile when I accused him of having acquired an unlawful, a wizard influence over the mind of this foolish girl—God send, its evil shadow extend to no worse corruption, if worse can be!"

"No, no, no, it cannot be, Lord Cardinal! Innocence shines like sunshine on the snow, all over her!" exclaimed Roodspere, with vehemence.

"Why then, it will not long so last! This confessor will weary soon to be the god of the

cold idolatry of the mind! The mind of women!—what were it to rule in that, young clerk? He will but use the dominion he has usurped there to effect a subjection more to the taste—at least, of a fleshly monk! How say you, Cromwel, are we to believe at this time of the world, that this railing rebel of ours is a saint, because the lewd people, who ever delight in such, and my enemies of the court, applaud him lustily for one?"

"It is for Master Roodspere to set us right an he be so, my lord!" replied Cromwel, demurely. "Let your grace but place our young doctor in the throne of power—in the confessional—and he may prosper better with his reasons and arguments than your grace with the seeming temptations and glorious proffers which it pleased you to assail Mistress Paulet withal!—I have already told you how the monks of Cambridge were driven as nigh mad with them as men already out of their senses can be, with aught!"

"It shall be so—it shall be! The first act of your visitation, Master Roodspere, shall be to dispossess Sancgraal of his abused office of confessor to the nuns of Clerkenwell, in whose place we will and do solemnly install yourself!" exclaimed Wolsey, with sudden anima-

tion. "Cromwel, as we think, these letters mandatory need no other addition—and that we will instantly, with our own hand confirm!"

The secretary immediately with great eagerness drew a table on which was an ink-standish of massive silver, and pens set in a spread tail of peacock's feathers, to the Cardinal, nevertheless watching with quiet solicitude the play of Roodspere's countenance. A variety of sentiments evidently struggled in it; some words of negation or of remonstrance arose in faint murmurs to his lips—but then he hesitated, paused, and eventually remained silent, while Wolsey wrote the addition to the rescript which constituted him visitor of Westminster, in a large, flourishing text-hand, as if rejoicing in the confusion and mortification thus heaped upon his adversaries. Roodspere's resolve against accepting any office in the service of the Cardinal had suddenly melted away! All unconsciously to himself two passions which are wontedly born twins in the human heart, had sprung into existence in his own; and jealousy of the inordinate ascendancy assumed by Sancgraal over the youthful novice, a desire to rescue her from the spiritual bondage in which she seemed en-

thralled, had acquired as strong an influence over his feelings as the wish to see her again, and even to continue his protection of her against the machinations of his mighty and unscrupulous sire. Old cherished purposes and objects resumed their interrupted sway, and in brief he offered no further opposition to the acceptance of the office thus urged upon him.

"Here are the papers duly signed—let them be put in force, Cromwel, without delay," said Wolsey, tossing the parchment, graced with his potent signature, to the exultant secretary. "Put our will in force without stint or pause!—You shall lack no aid, master Visitor, which our power, and our king's, our wit, wealth, and unbounded Legacy, can bring to your support; and Westminster will be a strange exception to the rule if you find not matter of conviction among them, on diligent perquisition! The *more*, the *merrier!* The saturnalia of their great feast of St. Edward are at hand; and the queen, forsooth, makes a solemn pilgrimage thither, to let all men see how she takes part with them in their perversity against us! We will give them a rally they do not expect! You shall have the pulpit on that day, and preach before her and them,

and let all men know some of our verities! You shall preach, Master Roodspere, on the disorders produced in Christianity by the false teachings, inventions, and hypocritical practices of the monks, which do us infinitely more harm than all Martin's heresies! Take, if thou wilt, St. Paul's first to the Romans; for indeed the monks either do themselves, or sanction in others, all the like enormities, and are given over to a reprobate sense in all things, even as we wrote to his Holiness, with our own hand! Yea, I doubt not we shall find in them the most obstinate maintainers of the lawfulness of our king's forbidden marriage with his brother's wife!"

Cromwel started, and looked in amazement at his master, making this unexpected revelation of the momentous secret of his policy! But no less to his surprise, Roodspere accepted it quite as a matter of course, and replied with warmth: "The decision of that point, as of all others of divine law, is to be sought only in the rolls of the Scripture, not in the mouths of the false interpreters thereof, my lord!"

"Why then, what said John Baptist to King Herod: 'It is not lawful for thee to have her!'—being his brother Philip's wife!"

returned Wolsey, with sparkling eyes, and his whole visage indeed alit with vindictive triumph.

"It is even so! I do remember me of the very words:—'Οὐκ ἔξεσί σοι ἔχειν αὐτήν!'" said Roodspere in a tone of sudden but impassioned conviction.

"But did not John Baptist lose his head, for the utterance of that same oracle, master clerk?" said Cromwel, now with sardonic significance. "Our Herodias has a daughter, too! It is true she is no great dancer, but nevertheless there may be other ways found to boll off a head into a charger!"

"It is true—time is not yet ripe—I would not have you incur any danger on this score, Master Roodspere, till you see our whole battalia on the march!" said Wolsey, in tones of affectionate apprehension, yet with something of doubt and perplexity at his own imprudence in so perilous a revelation.

"Let us remove the foundations, the superstructures will fall of their own weight! I will content me with showing that the Scriptures are the only true Christian law—the canons and the Pope's decretals to be listened to only in so far as they coincide with the written statutes there!" exclaimed Roodspere, with

enthusiasm. Wolsey looked at him for a moment with very considerable anxiety and increased hesitation. "This doctrine is good so far as regards the bulls that sanctified this unlawful marriage—but—" he observed, with something of suspicion and withdrawal in his whole manner: "*But*, master doctor, you come from a suspected place! It is known that some spurs of Luther's cancer have struck root in Cambridge and tainted the sweetness of its blood! Be not too rash: the king's title of *Defensor Fidei*, is still fire-new—he is wearing it in its newest gloss! Preach so that I may fairly take occasion therefrom to recommend you for consultation on the matter to his grace, in his secret musings upon it, wherein of late he has grown very moping and lonesome! But not with an unadvised openness! You shall measure your own reward—and so shall all who aid me—when the field is won!"

"For my part, I would rather have Sancgraal disappointed of the sweet cake he thinks he has put by in his close cupboard, than if Martin Luther's neck were wrung like a blanket between two washers!" said Cromwel.

"Ay, indeed!! I fear me, of a verity, Master Roodspere will find this girl hath other reasons

than her pretended aversion to the congruous matrimony I proposed her, or the pretty nickname given her by the nuns, to believe she hath a call to immure herself at his evil devotion; in Clerkenwell!" said Wolsey. "This be your primal task, fair clerk, to discover how the truth stands herein! But we warn you, my lady prioress hath a hawk's eye for a gosling—and her sorrow over Sir Malpas de Wilton's broken neck must nigh be over and done!"

"I trust, my lord, you do not fear to find in me so gross a violator of my ordination vows, if any danger truly were of temptation!" said Roodspere, with a deep indignant blush.

"Why, no, certes no! Rather, if it might be, too stiff an observer of the same! But Gardiner warned us—I mean he told us—thou wert no courtier!—Howbeit, the rust of the schools will rub off after some rough encounter with the bustle of the world! And now, Cromwel, go at all paces ere the air can carry tidings of our purposes to the monks! And farewell, fair son! Master secretary will give you items more precise of the service I expect from you, at fitting intervals—though we shall also be glad of your diligent frequentation hither! Meanwhile, Cromwel have a care to let this

Sancgraal's wastrel brother, who thinks we are so ignorant of our duty to the king as to send him to wench and dice it in the government of Calais, know that he but sends his time after his money!"

Roodspere could not but feel most emphatically that he was dismissed—dismissed, in spite of the gracious softening of the latter expressions, in a manner that invited not to much future personal intimacy. But the Cardinal also enforced his meaning by rising; an unusual honour, through which Cromwel nevertheless perceived with regret that his main purpose of bringing about a cordial reconciliation and conjunction between the father and son was foiled. He could scarcely wonder at it, considering the circumstances, and he felt the necessity of suppressing his sentiments, and even of counterfeiting a joyful alacrity in obedience.

"We will but pause to put Master Roodspere in fitter array, and to break his fast, an it please your grace! You see how my thrifty fellow, Gardiner, kept him clad; and, I'll warrant me, he has only fed on promises since he was among us here in the court."

"Nay, let him tarry his own time, and that of his necessities. I do but bid Master Rood-

spere farewell for mine own part, remembering me that I have promised the king's highness to be at Hampton Court, to receive the French ambassadors, if per case they should hunt that way from Windsor to-night," said Wolsey, with evident embarrassment. "Master Roodspere should tarry with us wholly, but that he cannot exercise the needful supervision of his office elsewhere than in the Abbey!—Gardiner is to blame! We bade him supply you with all needfuls, Master Roodspere: but until now noted not that the gold lacked gilding! Let him have the best of my household stuffs for a raiment, Cromwel; and now, go, fair son, with my benediction!"

The Cardinal's voice trembled as he pronounced these latter words, while slowly, and with a reluctance which escaped not his keen, though silent observation, Roodspere knelt before the man to whom he owed existence, and who now, for the second time, seemed only anxious to rid himself of his presence. He touched his lips in cold homage to the hand extended to him with something also of repulsion and unwillingness.

"Why, this is well! You are not now so subject as of yore, Raphael, to tearful fits of the mother! *Hysterica passio* masters you

not now!" said Wolsey, for the first time yielding to something of profound regret and plaintiveness in his tones. "Well, well, it must be borne—it is part belike of our fitting chastisement! We have no claim—no right to a child's love and duty! Time levels the mountains! Why should it not remove the land-marks from men's hearts? It is well—it is as it should be! We Levites are a tribe set apart—we must not think to share the common blessedness of nature in our affections more than vulgar men the honours due to those who vanquish them! We must not root ourselves in any soil by these mighty fibres of the heart, but be ever ready for transplanting wherever the lord of the forest sees fit! An encampment we are, and not a city—sojourners, and not dwellers, in the land! God be with you, good son! We blame you not; albeit, having your mother's looks, we might have fancied once you had her loving and forgiving spirit too!"

There was a deep silence of some moments, during which the Cardinal bent over the kneeling figure at his feet with anxious scrutiny; during which even two or three salty drops, reddening his eyes, distilled like splashes of molten lead on Roodspere's face,

and produced the like contortion of silent agony in the muscle of his wrenched visage; but not the perhaps expected yielding! Even Cromwel, hardened by the stormy changes of his life, and the little natural sympathy he had with the weaker emotions of humanity, felt himself more moved, as he watched the scene, than he could divine that Roodspere was from aught in his reply.

"I beseech your grace natheless—not to let me be the cause of chasing you from your own princely home, at what may not be a well-assorted time! I will rid it instantly of my evil-liked presence! This garb suits not ill with mine office; and I have oft fasted more unwillingly than I shall to-day ere I eat the bread I am to earn in the Abbey of Westminster!"

"You reproach us with what we have learned was rather your own churlish disdain and pride than any fault of ours.—Climbing our giddy heights, how might we look down whence we arose, without fear of slipping our hold, or dizzying us with the depth? But you disdained us, Raphael, and your gentle mother's wailing belief in us, alike!" said the Cardinal, rising with sudden asperity and haughtiness from his solicitous attitude. "Nicholas Hopkins knew nothing of the infinite ignominy and shame

that awaited us almost as soon as we had kissed thee for the first time, sleeping rosily on thy mother's heart—yet drawing thine horoscope, he warned us that thine encounter, wherever we met, should not be simply harmful and dangerous to us—but *fatal* to our dearest hopes and purposes! Therefore have we the less reason to proffer than thou to refuse our kindly invitations! But therein follow your own pleasure, which belike may also be the promptings of my better angel—that glorious one who, for the universal preservation of the Church, would conduct me to its paramounce and sovereignty!"

"Master Cromwel, I am ready!" said Roodspere.

"Nay, nay, we will not run the palace like scalded dogs!—Master Roodspere, methinks you should have some sense of his grace's condescending, if but—Who is there?" exclaimed Cromwel, breaking off as a tap at the oratory door, gentle as the stroke of a wolf's paw—very different from Roodspere's style of requesting the privilege of the *entrée*—was audible.

"Who dares intrude hither without due heralding? Is our palace become a wayside inn?" said Wolsey with angry vehemence.

"It is I, my blessed lord, it is I—with Roman mud still on my boots!—bringing most joyful news, whereof none should have the start of me in the delivery!" replied a voice, whose naturally morose and stern tones were softened to a cajoling whine. Cromwel himself lost colour as he exclaimed, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John!—bless this bed that I lie on!—here's the devil to pay, and Stephen Gardiner come for the money!"

CHAPTER XI.

ANCIENT WESTMINSTER.

Look with a curious eye all Europe round,
And show one rich, one healthy spot of ground,
But there some Abbey is, or else hath been,
And ev'n in ruins their wise choice is seen.

ANON.

FEW districts of the metropolis which has since so worthily achieved the title of the Babylon of Bricks, have more materially changed in aspect from the days of our sometime truly dread sovereign lord, King Henry VIII., than the one taking its designation from the great ecclesiastical structure immemorially known as Westminster. In the years of the dawning Reformation, what is now the site of a vast and ever-enlarging city, was a district of woodland and meadow, cornfields, orchards, gardens, and other rural dependencies of the wealthy Abbey of St. Peter. A thinly scattered agricultural vassalage, dwelling in remote hamlets and farmsteads, was distributed over

the space where an immense population, closely agglomerated, now present every variety of human condition, from imperial state to abject beggary and want! Of the palatial monastery which gave its name to so extensive a territory, only the dilapidated but still magnificent church, and a few other isolated vestiges remain. At the period we allude to, it was an establishment on the grandest scale which all England—the paradise of monachism—could boast. The Abbey, properly so called, was a great congeries of buildings, adhering to the church which popularly enjoys the title in our day, on the south; and covered what is now a wilderness of mean and dilapidated streets with the stately gothic dwellings, outhouses, and cultivated enclosures necessary for the comfortable accommodation and enjoyment of the numerous community of the Benedictines of Westminster.

The entire district still bearing the name —with the exception of what, in comparison, was a very insignificant portion allotted to the use of the English kings, whose ancient palace occupied nearly the same ground as the modern one, appropriated to another sovereignty—all Westminster was the patrimony of the Abbey of St. Peter. This desig-

nation had far outgrown the modest limits to which it was originally confined—that "Thorny Isle" where tradition boldly asserted St. Peter had founded an oratory, in the midst of a marshy wild, worthy of the name, but which he had thus marked out as a spot whose dedication he could accept with pleasure—graced indeed with consolatory associations to the disciple of Him who had worn the crown of the Cross! But the territories of the Abbey extended in every direction far beyond even the vast area that in modern times is known by its name. Its possessions extended along the river, with the slight interruption of the royal residence, from Chelsea to Whitehall; and thence, in a scarcely broken sweep, as far as Bayswater and Kensington on the west, and Oxford-street on the north, including what are now the populous parishes of St. James, St. George, St. Paul, and St. Anne; the entire district of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and all that extensive tract, now covered with a city of palaces, which then only formed part of the great manor of Hyde, belonging to the monks of Westminster. Indeed, it was scarcely possible for an Abbot of that community to get fairly out of his own territories, proceed in what direction he might, within any comfort-

able excursion from the centre of his possessions. Northward and north-westward the extensive domains of Hampstead and Hendon owned him sole lord; Paddington was his; Kilburn and Clerkenwell were nunneries of the foundation of his Abbey, and acknowledged his feudal supremacy. Beyond the gates of Temple Bar, in the east, in the very heart of the city, he possessed numerous advowsons, and other ecclesiastical dependencies. St. Martin's-le-Grand, the parish of the unfortunate Marchant Hunne; St. Bride's, in Fleet-street, and other scattered properties, gave him a secure footing in London. To the south, the entire district, from St. James's-Park, over what were then the unenclosed and marshy wastes of Tothill-Fields, which yet furnished abundant food for the great flocks of the Abbey that almost exclusively supplied the woolstaple established in its vicinity, acknowledged the exclusive sway of the crosier of Westminster.

This great space, now covered with swarming multitudes, was, as we have previously observed, almost entirely a tract of champaign and woodland, tenanted by an agricultural population in widely apart localities. The only counterpart to the modern city that could be

said to exist was contained in the walled enclosure denominated the Sanctuary of Westminster, in nigh propinquity to the Abbey; which, though not even acknowledged as a township, had risen, unacknowledged, into one of very considerable and dangerous importance. It was a confined and gloomy aggregate of buildings, surrounded by strong and lofty walls, which could only be entered under the portcullis of the Gatehouse prison, and by permission of the abbatial authorities. A city of refuge for the crimes and misery of the age, from the draconic fury of laws whose bloodthirsty severity has only been moderated in our days—but also a haunt and school for every species of demoralisation and villany. This Rome-like nucleus of a city, was only separated by a narrow road from the royal palace of Westminster, and by the churchyard of the Abbey, from its ecclesiastical lords and protectors. The victory of the church over the laity in the middle ages could scarcely have been more emphatically asserted than by this close neighbourhood of the supreme executive power of the laws with a fortress of her raising which secured impunity to their most flagrant violators! But guarded by the curse of St. Edward, the Sanctuary of Westminster had for ages

furnished an asylum indifferently to misfortune and to guilt, which the mightiest princes and the bloodiest tyrants alike had feared to violate. Richard III., himself, had not dared to drag his young victims by open force from its sheltering walls—and the Avenger of Blood still sheathed his sword powerlessly at its gates.

This township and the royal palace were the only numerous collections of habitable dwellings throughout all Westminster and its far-stretching liberties. Charing Cross was a village; St. Giles was a village; Paddington was a scarcely known hamlet, whose revenues an Abbot of Westminster had thought no more than sufficient to supply an annual festal commemoration of his death, for the good of his soul, by the poor. Covent Garden then grew what it now only markets—indeed, the whole district of St. Paul's-west had a reasonable claim to the designation, since it was almost entirely devoted to the purposes of an immense market-garden, whence the monks of Westminster derived a great revenue from the cultivation and sale of fruits and vegetables to the neighbouring city. The royal palace was, however, of very great extent, as was necessary to accommodate the courts of the feudal kings whose armies were their house-

holds. But as it confined itself chiefly to rambling along the shore of the river, it did not seriously straiten the monks of Westminster in any of their enjoyments or privileges; and on the whole the Palace and the Abbey had for ages been better neighbours than the two political powers they might be said to personify, on the wider elbow-room of the world. This result was perhaps to be imputed in no slight degree to the fact that the civil as well as ecclesiastical government of Westminster, with the exception only of the royal purlieus, was exclusively in the hands of its ecclesiastical lords. King St. Edward, preferring the claims of his saintship to those of his kingship, had so willed it when he granted his new foundation the civil jurisdiction of their endowments to the fullest extent, even to the power of inflicting capital punishment. In spiritual matters, the monks of Westminster claimed exemption from any jurisdiction but that of the Holy See, whose policy it had always been to attach the monastic orders directly to its dominion, to counterbalance the mutinous and independent spirit of the secular clergy. The marshals of the royal household had never been able to extend their jurisdiction beyond the imme-

diate precincts of the sovereign's abode; and throughout the entire district, Whitehall alone had managed to withdraw its neck from the yoke of the Abbey. The ecclesiastical princes who had there succeeded to a lay fief without the proper lay deference for a clerical authority inferior to their own, refused to admit the abbatial supremacy; and especially while the archbishopric of York was held by so haughty and puissant a prelate as Cardinal Wolsey, it was found necessary to let the claim fall into abeyance. The wild wisdom of the Welsh proverb, that all a wolf gets from a wolf is a torn skin—though not in that precise formula—had doubtless its influence in deterring the abbey from any vigorous prosecution of its rights during the time he held the see.

From this latter stiff-necked territory, on the eve of a fine autumn day, Raphael Roodspere and Master Secretary Cromwel took their unwelcome way to Westminster Abbey. A causeway so little used that it was grown with grass, and so rutted and uneven that it seemed as if only horsemen or pedestrians could make any use of it, led through open fields from York Place thither. The road was, in fact, used in few other means of locomotion, and

even by horsemen and pedestrians but rarely, the Thames, like the liquid pavements of Venice, forming the great highway of the city, then chiefly built upon its banks. On one side of the way was an open expanse of fields and woody lands, since converted into St. James's and the Green Park—in the former of which was situated a hospital for leprous women—a disease that had continued to afflict the blood of the west from the time of the Crusades. On the other, the broad gleam of the Thames bounded a marshy tract that bordered it—slumbering like an infant hero in the cradle, unconscious of the glories in store for it—scarcely traversed by any vessels of more consequence than the boats and barges of the London citizens, or the light skiffs of fishermen, who still found salmon and trout in its untroubled waves. But soon the way narrowed, and became enclosed between the masses of the royal palace and the haggard houses of the Sanctuary, which seemed tumbling like drunkards in one another's arms over the high dead wall that girded in its ruffianly population.

The ancient Palace of Westminster by no means boasted the magnificence of florid uniformity which its modern successor offers

to the gaze. It presented specimens of almost every species of architecture that had flourished in England, from the time when the Confessor first made it the abode of sovereignty. The gray Saxon keep, from whose windows the sainted king witnessed the progress of his architectural vow, in the erection of the Abbey of Westminster, still stood like a shrouded ghost in the midst of an unlicensed revelry, surrounded by a wilderness of structures in the various Anglo-Gothic styles succeeding his era. From the buildings on the north of the royal precincts known as the New Palace, to those on the south, designated the Old Palace, five centuries had exhibited the varieties of their tastes and requirements, in a strange, but imposing and majestic medley. The graceful pinnacles of St. Stephen's, and the massive masonry of Westminster Hall, marked almost the perfection and the commencement of Gothic architecture, from the moment when it first ventured to elongate the solemn Roman semicircular arch, until, like the expanding stalk of a flower, it flew up into the aerial lines of the pointed style, and covered itself with exquisite decoration. Walls, strengthened by bastions and massive gateway towers, defended the palace even on the peaceful side of the

Abbey. A winding reach of the Thames, called Long Ditch, partially encircled it with a moat, and the broad river behind rendered the palace the secure fortress, as well as stately abode of royalty. It extended along the Thames from the present locality of the dismal Penitentiary at Milbank, to Westminster Bridge—which then was not, and threatens soon not to be again.

Cromwel scarcely took the trouble of pointing out this royal residence to the Cambridge scholar's notice. He was altogether absorbed in its haggard competitor, the Sanctuary, and in railing at the monks for the use they made of the pernicious privileges accorded to them in its limits. According to him, there was no crime so black—no criminal so detestable—which or whom they considered unworthy of their countenance and protection, provided they were allowed a suitable share in the fruits of the offence. Thieves, murderers, forgers, traitors, and miscreants of every hue, shared impunity, and projected new ravages within their walls, on these terms; fraudulent debtors defied their creditors under their patronage, and lived luxuriously on the plunder thus secured. Meanwhile, according to Cromwel, the church partook the guilt with the proceeds

of crime, in the shape of entrance-fees and contributions exacted from all the residents of the Sanctuary.

Inveighing thus, Cromwel led his companion past the Sanctuary wall, until they arrived opposite a massive tower admitting into the court-yard of the Old Palace. Here was an entrance into the churchyard before the Abbey — already a place of tombs, and paved with memorials of the ancient dead, but shaded by trees, whose lofty branches almost rivalled the height of the majestic structure itself, and perhaps its antiquity. A swing-gate, in a porch near which, in a species of watch-box, sate a monk, whose office it was to question and carefully observe all who entered, but who was fast asleep, admitted into the precincts. Winking humorously at this drowsy Cerberus—Cromwel led the way into the enclosure, and Roodspere started to find himself once more in the presence of the august pile whose associations had haunted him so drearily during so many years!

How different is the Westminster Abbey of our days from that on which Raphael Roodspere gazed at this momentous period of the sixteenth century, when, like one commissioned to slay a king, he beheld it rise

before him in all the majesty of its imperial robes and diadem, as if to receive the blow with dignity! It was drawing towards sunset, and the golden light of the westering orb touched the fretted pinnacles of the church with the glow of the gorgeous emblem of sovereignty, while it cast the purple shadows of the buttresses into masses of relief, resembling rich folds of a royal robe falling around some Titan monarch's towering form!

Westminster Abbey was at this period in the palmiest day of its glory; but like the Gothic faith of which it was the expression, on the verge of a decay that was finally to leave little more than a vast and crumbling ruin, incongruously patched and renovated—to make the legends of its grandeur sound fabulously in the ears of future generations! It needed the loving vigilance of men who like the monks, associated their existence and habitual thought with those beautiful and highly-wrought monuments of human labour and ingenuity—whose very ruins are still the proudest boast of our architecture—to preserve them from the destructive agencies which have left us little more than the gaunt outlines of the ecclesiastical art of our ancestors. What is in reality, though apparently only the exter-

nal embellishment, the essential life and poetry of Gothic architecture—that profuse splendour of decoration which forced the rude materials of stone and wood to burst as it were into a flowering of ornament—has departed with the spirit of impassioned material devotion that devised it as its expression! Departed, like the fantastic fictions of the frost from the panes in a thaw, from the walls and bare pinnacles of Westminster Abbey! In our days the spectator gazes on vast but bald masses denuded of almost all those rich and characteristic embellishments which the Gothic architect was wont to throw, like a glittering woof of silver lace over a beautiful woman, heightening the effect of the charms it seems to cover. Time, or the more impoverishing hand of the restorer, has stripped off so much of that transparent woof of arabesque—that embroidery wrought by the chisel—that brocade in stone, that the antiquary himself, even if assisted by a goodly modicum of the very necessary quality in his pursuits of imagination, can scarcely conjure up a vision of the spectacle that Raphael Roodspere gazed upon with his bodily eyes in the autumn of 1527.

He stood directly facing the great northern

entrance of the church, which then well deserved its title of the Beautiful, or Solomon's Gate. Elaborate carvings of the saints and apostles, wrought delicately as if in fine ivory, decorated the now mouldering and unornamented porch. The crumbling gallery over it was then what the architect intended it should be—a rich fringe to the embroidered stonework above, and an elevated stage for the display of the most striking and magnificent ceremonials of a church delighting in such. Thence the abbots of Westminster on all solemn festivals bestowed their benediction on the kneeling throngs of the devotees of St. Edward—and there they presented themselves after an election to receive the homage of their vassals and dependents. In the now empty niches above the gallery, and skirting the whole extent of the pile, stood the statues of the sainted founders of the Abbey, or of the innumerable kings—its protectors and embellishers, crowned and wreathed, sceptred and crosiered, a worthy guard to the illustrious structure they had reared through ages of perseverance and toil. The fretted pinnacles of the screen, airy and light as if raised like the walls of Thebes, by a magic melody, concealed the vast roof of the church,

and the absence of the great tower and spire which its founders purposed should crown and overlook the whole. This grand completion of the work had not yet been attained, but the stately ideal had continued to animate and direct for ages the labours of the monkish proprietors of Westminster. It was the favourite object, the master-passion, of the long life of Abbot Islip; and but for the sudden destruction at hand, it would probably have been achieved, and a centre-piece of suitable grandeur would have balanced the prodigious but now apparently scarcely connected masses of the Abbey. The Reformation owes some great reparation to Westminster Abbey, which suffered much from the blind fury of her youth —and its completion thus would be a noble one! The unfinished state of the structure is indeed an eloquent reproach to a nation which expended on an evanescent palace of glass, far more than would suffice to restore one of the most illustrious of our ancestral monuments to more than primeval magnificence!

In Roodspere's day, the line of flying buttresses that prop the walls of the principal masses of the church with their giant shoulders, were not reduced to a plain and quakerly simplicity, agreeing well enough

with their present drab-coloured facings, but not at all with the exterior of a Gothic cathedral. They were crowned with turrets, fretted and shaped so as amply to vindicate the claims of Westminster to the dignity of a mitred abbey. The two great western towers had not yet been raised above the height of the middle mass, and consequently, though the projected sublime tower of the centre was not in existence, the balance of the building was not yet painfully affected to the eye. Sir Christopher Wren, who carried them up to their present altitude, thus made the extremities of the abbey church its loftiest parts—the feet higher than the head! But he, too, beheld in his mind's eye the superior elevation of the central tower, whose fallacious vision has haunted the projects of the architects of Westminster so vainly from its foundation. It cannot be said that, with all his taste and genius, Wren has been successful even in the effect of his completions of the twin western towers. The great classical architect made his restorations in the style, but not in the spirit, of the architecture whose intentions were to be carried out. The grand characteristics of the pointed Gothic—its light, pyramidal, flame-like aspiration to the skies—

is lost in those heavy square belfries, too large for their bases, which clump the summits of the western towers; and the clocks that stare from them with the incongruous effect of sun-flowers in a yew-tree, tell that the hour of Gothic architecture was indeed sounded when they were placed on their impudent elevation! A vast sun-dial, inlaid with brazen figures of the Apostles, before the north gate, supplied the office of those uncongenial chronometers—at least according to the beautiful motto which it were as well perhaps if its spirit were more extensively imbued in modern time-calculations:—"*Horas non numero nisi serenas!*"

But in Roodspere's age, as in our own, the eye was speedily captivated by the elaborate beauty of the opposite extremity of the masses of the church, formed by the chapel of Henry VII. That "wonder of the world," as Leland so fondly calls it, had only been finished about a quarter of a century, and was in all the glow of its novel splendours. The action of the atmosphere had as yet only diffused a tint of bright amber on the stone which, conjoined with the profusion of gilding, and the minute richness of the ornaments, gave the whole building the appearance of

one wrought in massive gold, and chased by the skill of an artificer in the precious metal.

Skirting the little chapel or church of St. Margaret, which then as now stood before the Abbey like a pert dwarf comparing altitudes with a giant, Roodspere continued for awhile to gaze with emotion at the noble structure before him. He could not behold it with the indifference of our modern eyes—under that full but cold light of reason which has disenchanted the past superstitions of mankind of all their miraculous halo! Roodspere was a reformer, imbued with all the reasoning convictions which made him regard as rank idolatry the deification of man and death that had raised the mighty temple before him. But still he could not entirely divest himself of what was still as it were the very atmosphere of his times—and Westminster Abbey was yet awful in its associations with the most fondly cherished popular beliefs—with the most striking and affecting of the legends of mediæval mythology! Founded nearly a thousand years, even in the reign of him who was destined to overthrow the faith that reared it from a hermit's cell in a swamp of the Thames, to its then pomp and grandeur, it was the tabernacle of a royal saint whose

dust was still supposed to work visible miracles —who alone in all England—in all Christendom —rivalled the fame of the champion-martyr of the church, St. Thomas a'Becket. Relics still held most holy in the credulous imagination of the people, decked all its numerous shrines. It possessed a vial containing some drops of the precious blood which, trickling on the cross, redeemed the sins of all mankind! The Prince of the Apostles himself was said to have consecrated it, attended by a choir of angels, with tapers and incense brought from on high. St. John the Evangelist was believed to have trodden its aisles once in the course of that long pilgrimage that tradition averred he was to keep on the earth till the second coming. The glories of history and of the monarchy were almost equally associated with those of the popular faith. Within the hallowed precincts of Westminster Abbey almost all the kings of England, from the Confessor and the Conqueror, had attained the height of human glory in their crowns, or had sunk to the universal level in their graves! Its very dust was purple with the ashes of kings; great nobles and high-born dames, heroes, sages, legislators, only were permitted to crumble beneath its consecrated stones

besides! There was scarcely a memorable fact, or a mighty actor, in the great drama of English history, but was in some manner or another connected with this gorgeous monument —the coronation-hall and mausoleum of four mighty dynasties that had filled the world with their fame—and now the aisles of Westminster with an eternal silence!

To complete the spell it chanced that it was about the conclusion of the service with which the Roman Church marks the conclusion of the religious day; and the full swelling pomp of the choir rolled in billows of harmony through all the aisles, and through the open portals of Solomon's Porch, to Roodspere's hearing. Never before had he listened to music so august—so perfect in its rhythm and modulation—so magnificently melodious and one in its massive movements—so richly decorated by the filagree harmony of a single voice, which throughout the stately divisions of the anthem continued to pour over it streams of variegated sweetness like the showery spray of a fountain falling into its deep basin—like the notes of a sky-lark over the full woodland choir of the vallies below! The voice was of the most incomparable luscious quality, profuse in every imaginable trill and gush of

the very soul of melody—in itself singly, as it seemed, endowed with all the infinitely-intermingled sweetness and languishment of a thousand nightingales! One of those rare voices which at once enchant the ear and enthral the heart—a voice which realised the fable of the syrens, that if not heard would scarcely have seemed possible to be of earthly heritage! Was it indeed the voice of a fallen chorister of heaven—of some sweet singer before the Lord, exiled for disobedience awhile on the earth? Or was it, as Roodspere was too rationally compelled to conjecture, that of some Italian master of melody brought home by the travelled prior to heighten the effects in which he delighted, or to train his barbarous choir in the wonders of that new art of music whose prodigies were scarcely as yet known save by report to the inharmonious nations of the north?

As it was now darkening into the early twilight of autumn, Roodspere's gaze within the interior of the church—and from the spot where he stood the immense transverse of the cross was distinguishable—nevertheless only presented him with a confused vision of kneeling devotees, half lost in the shadows of the prodigious vaults and innumerable pillars of

the church, or mellowed into the sombre pomp of a rich sunset in the many-coloured glow of the painted windows. He could, therefore, discover but little to satisfy his curiosity on the subject of the owner of that marvellous voice—and Cromwel left him but a brief while to indulge in cogitations on the subject. Far from sharing in his emotion, the secretary abruptly called away his companion's attention to an entirely different spectacle, which had occupied his own all along. On the opposite side of the cemetery, immediately before the heavy and lugubrious-looking tower of the Gatehouse, a group was assembled engaged in a recreation which it needed but little familiarity with such sports to discern was that of cockfighting. An elephantine monk, of extraordinary bulk and stature, was kneeling in the midst of a ring formed by a very miscellaneous rabble, fastening the spurs on a large black cock; while, at a little distance, a small, keenly-visaged man was as actively engaged, with the assistance of divers volunteers, in caparisoning a red cock, of similarly diminished size as himself, for battle with the monk's huge fowl. A strapping virago of a woman, with arms akimbo, and a sour, contemptuous look, watched the progress of

events from the postern of the Gatehouse tower, with a bunch of large keys at her girdle, that seemed almost to announce her as some sort of jaileress-depute.

"Yonder is Dan Gildas, the jolly cellarer of Westminster, surnamed among the husbands of the vassalage, the abbey cuckoo!—And the little man there is the jailer of the Gatehouse, who was accused with Treasurer Gislebert of the murder of Hunne!—Let us give them the first startle of our news," said Cromwel, who seemed to rejoice exceedingly in the prospect of the consternation of the monks. Roodspere complied, and together they approached the circle formed around the cockfighters who, they found, had chosen the Place of the Ordeal for the scene of their mock conflict—the very spot upon which Marchant Hunne's body had been calcined into dust! But by the time they arrived, some kind of dispute had arisen among the human bipeds of almost as vehement a nature as that which they intended to provoke between their warlike birds.

"Thou pestilent Lollard! thou Wicliffe's Wicket, thou!—what advantage have I taken of thee to give my cock a quaff of good ale before he encounters with thy wretched kestrel?" the indignant monk was observing

in irritated tones. "Thou liest, I say, to feign I use art magic in the matter—or that my lord the prior taught me how to make my viper jellies that I give him, out of the magic books of the Jews! St. Dominic hath only his good courage and the abbey's good ale to make him so ready—and thou liest like a pagan and no true cockmaster to say otherwise!"

"Cry you patience, my lord cellarer! I did but jest—but I am no more a heretic than thou art a true priest!" returned the little man. "My little cock, Dr. Martin, fears not thy bullying St. Dominic, magic or none! but to give him the vantage of the spurs, I see no reason—and we will not fight unless we have a fair field and no favour!"

"Thou art a heretic, 'tis certain! How oft has thy poor woman confessed to me that thou eatest eggs on a Friday, sucking them raw like a weasel rather than not break the church's fasts!" returned the monk, indignantly smoothening his robe on a portion of his person evidently not dedicated to temperance, which swelled like a bellying mainsail beneath his girdle.

"Yea, sir, I do say so, and will maintain it! I would my lord prior might lend ear to all that I could tell him!—for he says that Hunne

was a good, religious man, and never came fairly by his end! By our blessed Lady! I could keep the jail much better without the little fulsome otter to drink all our fees at St. Julian's!" said the tall virago, in the shrill and screeching voice of an habitual scold, from the arched postern of the Gatehouse.

"Marry, and he should know for he was jailer then—was Master Joakin Mugwort!—which was before he wedded Long Meg of Westminster, to help him to keep ghosts away, affrighted with the clamour of her tongue!" whispered Cromwel to Roodspere. "Let us draw nigh, and hear what follows."

"Peace, peace, goodwife! Have a care!—thou mayst do more mischief to thy spouse than thou wottest of! At best Father Gislebert's temper is not of distilled honey; but the mention of Hunne's name drives him ever on the farther side of his wit," said the monk, very gravely.

"I would he heard me then, my lord Dan Gildas! The little rogue here will oft maintain, when he is drunk—which he is seven days in the week, and Sundays to boot!—that the blood gushed out of old Dickon's nostrils as oft as my lord treasurer came nigh him!" returned the virago.

"Why, so it did—and so belike it would have done, had he not been there! I saw what I saw!—and do oft see what I see besides!" returned the little jailer undauntedly.

"The devil carry thee, say I!—Didst thou not say thou sawest my lord the cellarer hugging me on Assumption night behind the great yewtree?" screeched the fond wife.

"If the devil hears any woman at prayers in all England, wife, he will hear thee!" returned Mugwort—"and let him carry me where he will, he cannot carry me to worse company than thine!"

"Hear to him, master cellarer!—How long will you suffer the little villain to blaspheme me thus?" shouted Long Meg, at the pitch of her discordant voice.

"Why, dame, you are to blame!—What can I do?—Joakin, you are also to blame to anger your poor wife thus!—What cause hath she ever given thee for jealousy that thou ratest her thus before folk?" said the monk, evidently perplexed.

"Abundant cause!—as wide in the girth, Friar Gildas, as thine own goodly self!—But let her rave: my lord the prior will not see me unjustly entreated to pleasure any of you! Himself hath so promised me, and he knows

what manner of ill-will ye bear me!" said Mugwort, significantly. "But briefly—shall thy cock fight mine on the wager, or shall Smiling Willie take him home to roost in whole feathers; for methinks it is bedtime with him now?"

A gaunt figure of a man, with bolt upright red hair, and an idiotic grin on the muscles of his visage, which had procured him his nickname, stretched a pair of extraordinarily long hands, as if to obey his master's behest, and remove Dr. Martin from the appointed lists. But a general murmur of deprecation at the threatened interruption of the sport arose from the surrounding rabble.

"Peace, peace, my children!—St. Dominic is no recreant to fly the field," said the cellarer, benignantly. "Let them fight without spurs since thou challengest mine for too long! Clear the lists, fair sirs, and let the good knights do!"

"So say I, brother Gildas!" muttered Cromwel; "Roodspere, speak to the fat old rogue—I am too well known among them—and ask whether the Lord Abbot is in his house or no."

Roodspere complied, addressing the cellarer by the usual courteous designation of father,

and Dan Gildas turned his large sensual visage, shining all over with the oil of plenty, with a humorous cock of the eye upon the querent. "Ah, benedicite!—why dost thou call me father?—I mind not that thy mother was ever a vassal of Westminster!" he replied, sticking his tongue in his cheek in a manner that provoked an universal peal of laughter.

"Cuckoos lay their eggs in other birds' nests!" observed the little jailer, and the laugh was renewed.

"What, indeed, should one expect from a monk but indecent ribaldry and insult?'" said Roodspere, turning away in disgust.

"Marry, and who art thou?" retorted the cellarer. "Some starved priest secular, famishing with his concubine on a glebe that has scarcely meat on it to keep a cow in bones! A fig for such Lutterworth parsons, say I—or this, if it suit you better, my chapman!" and he concluded with a gesture that again awakened a burst of sympathetic laughter in that meet audience, while it shook the air with a fleshy clap.

"God go with you, and go your ways, for you will not find him in ours, master scholar!" said Mugwort.

"Good sirs, in my land we do not treat

strangers thus; and your own ballads give warranty for a kinder reception of this one! Mind ye not the song your milk-maids themselves do oft chaunt in my hearing?" said now a voice of singularly rich and melodious tone, which came from a person who had very lately mingled with the throng around the cock-fighters. And the speaker continued by singing with wonderful sweetness, though with a good deal of a foreign accent, a verse of some ballad probably familiarly known at the time:—

"For the sake of my fair face stable my steed—
Richer than gold is beauty's meed,
And that I will pay to thee!
I have ridden far with those jingling bells,
But sweeter music within me dwells,
And that I will play to thee!"

Roodspere turned his gaze on this new interlocutor with some curiosity. But there was little to satisfy inquiry. The figure apparently of a young man, tall and well-made, somewhat peculiarly broad and full in the chest, in the scarlet gown of a chorister, whose countenance was almost covered in a black hood, was before him. From the shadows of this species of open mask the glow of a pair of

very brilliant and restless eyes, of strange opal hues, a deep golden purple being the predominant one, encountered his glance. The rest of the visage could scarcely be distinguished, but the complexion seemed of a sultry brown, evidently acquired by exposure to fiercer suns than ever shone in England, or native to its hues, and masses of wild, raven-black hair clung disorderly around it and on his shoulders, like the mane of an unbroken steed.

"I wish to speak with the Lord Abbot—I have business of infinite moment with him!" said Roodspere, much mollified by the courteous interference of the stranger.

"He is in his great chamber. I will guide you thither, master," replied the chorister, and now, with a still more foreign utterance, though he endeavoured with great success to shape his expressions vernacularly. He succeeded singularly well in all but the accentuation.

"You may guide us both then, dan chorister, for we are here on the same business!" said Cromwel, suddenly emerging from the midst of the crowd where he had hitherto kept up a quiet observation on all that passed.

"Holy Bennet! who is this? Master Secre-

tary Cromwel?" exclaimed the stranger, with a start that shook his whole frame, and retreating with as much precipitation as if he had seen a serpent suddenly erect its crest and forked tongue upon his path.

"I am Master Secretary Cromwel! But how know ye me, fair sir? Where did we ever meet heretofore?" returned Cromwel, gazing with evident curiosity at the cowled songster—with something indeed of puzzled wonder mingling in the calm austerity of analysis to which he usually subjected strangers.

"Nay, sir, I know you not!—All men know you for that you are, Master Cromwel!—All men in this much-vexed and harassed community!" replied the chorister, with evident inconsequence and perturbation, and the panic-stricken looks of cellarer Gildas, and of the Abbey vassalage around him, attested that Cromwel was certainly more generally known than admired among them. Many of the rabble, indeed, began quietly to steal away, as if averse to encounter his observation.

"Then master dan chorister!—but by what name may we more shortly conjure you withal?" said Cromwel with unabated curiosity

—perhaps it might have been with some keener and more absorbing sentiment.

"Romanus sum!—I am of Italy, fair sir, and speak your tongue of England but brokenly! Speak to me in Latin or Italian, I pray you, if you would that I should understand more than sounds, in your utterance! I am called Dan Gloria—Dan Gloria-in-Excelsis, in the Abbey here! I am præcentor of the choir, and my Lord, the prior, who sent for me from Italy, gave me that name because there is triumph in Heaven over a sinner saved—and because you English cannot easily pronounce my proper one!" replied the chorister, with remarkable confusion of words and manner.

"Why then, master præcentor—by St. Paul, you speak good enough English—to show us the way to your Abbot's presence!" returned Cromwel, with imperious vivacity. "And for you, dan cellarer," he continued directing his notice to the huge but now quaking and dismayed monk, "while we go thither, hasten to summon all your brethren—the prior and treasurer in especial—to hear certain letters read from the Lord Legate's grace, which concern all of ye in general and in particular, and disobedience to which will

bring down upon you all the lightnings of his wrath, to consume ye utterly!"

"God keep me!—I am but one—a poor manciple and steward of the kitchen to my Lord St. Peter of Westminster!" said the dismayed official, crossing himself as if against the visible presence of the fiend.

"The Lord Prior is in the very summit of the Abbey, in his hermitage!—faint in the third day of a fast he is keeping on behalf of the church, against heretics!" said the chorister, in a very flurried tone.

"And our treasurer is keeping a devotion which he ever observes before the Feast of St. Edward, at the Shrine!—Three thousand Paters and as many Aves, going round it on his knees, for the repose of the soul of the sometime honoured Lady Bigod of Chepstow, who died on the steps thereof, five-and-thirty years ago!" groaned Gildas.

"Let him lay the lash on thy fat shoulders instead, without stint or mercy, till Mugwort here cries 'Hold!' and by no enforcement of his spouse's bitter tongue!" returned Cromwel, jeeringly. "Look to it!—neglect what other duty ye may, all of ye instantly herd to the presence of your Abbot, to hear the contents of these letters I bear—or it will be the worse

for all recusants! And now good Roman, if Roman ye be—for your voice sounds to me as much a woman's as a man's and neither completely—but that is the favourite one, I wot well, among your Italian Leos and Clements!—I command you, in virtue of the obedience I am empowered to exact by my commission in this Abbey—lead to my Lord Abbot's audience!"

The præcentor seemed to hesitate for a moment—but on consideration evidently thought it best to obey without further remonstrance; and accordingly with a foreign cringe of courtesy which was not so naturally assumed as he doubtless intended, he led the way from the midst of the dissolving crowd towards the Abbey.

CHAPTER XII.

THE JERUSALEM CHAMBER.

But first I pray you of your courtesie,
That you n'arrette it not my vilainie,
If that I plainly speke in this matère,
To tellen you their wordes and their cheer!

CHAUCER.

LIKE most other abbots of high dignity, those of Westminster had a special household and residence assigned for their separate habitation. This mansion was a continuation of the western front of the abbey church, to which it might be said to adhere by the unsightly protuberance of the Jerusalem Chamber, an ugly excrescence that still deforms the grand façade there—and no longer on any reasonable pretext. It is not now reverenced as the apartment where the first king of the Lancastrian dynasty breathed his last—it is no longer a chamber of state rendered necessary by any profuse hospitality on the part of the ecclesiastics who have succeeded the monks of

Westminster. It hangs on the south-west tower like a tumour on an oak, as if devised for the express purpose of destroying the grandeur of the effect of the whole front—an anuerism on the mighty limb of a gladiator, that banishes the ideas of beauty and strength alike. How often has the chronologer of these memorials, when verifying the local truth of the antique records of the same, devoutly wished that this chamber possessed the locomotive power and spirit of the similarly hideous chapel of Loretto!

Dan Gloria led the way past the western front with a rapid and yet unwilling step, as if anxious to get a disagreeable and also a dangerous task over. He then turned aside into a vaulted passage, emerging in a court-yard of considerable extent, surrounded by the houses appropriated for the use of the canons, or superior monks, of the abbey—stately buildings congenial in architecture with the great pile that fronted them, though probably of a still remoter antiquity, as was witnessed by the circular form of the arches, and the lack of tracery ornaments and of mullions in the windows. It was a species of cloister; though not that known in the abbey by the name, which was assigned to the general com-

munity. A low massive vaulting ran round the sides of the court-yard, supported on these arches, and turning to the left the party soon arrived before the ponderous portal admitting to the abbot's house.

But ere they reached this point, Cromwel made an attempt to enter into confabulation with their guide, which met with very slight success. "Are you a native of these parts, that have dwelt long outlandishly, master præcentor?—or how say you! you are of Italy?"

"Signor, si! I am not wonted to your tongue!—I know not if I answer to your questions aright—*Roma est patria mea*," replied the choir-master, and now indeed in very foreign-sounding English.

"If you speak Latin, my master, here is a learned scholar could talk Cicero dumb! Ask this fair-spoken stranger, Master Roodspere, why he wears his liripoop so closely over his face?" said Cromwel. "Ask him if he is ashamed to show it, or if 'tis too precious for the common daylight that he keeps it so closely pent in a lavender-bag?"

Roodspere put this question in a civiller form, and in Latin that Erasmus would have thought good; but was also foiled by the

præcentor's reply. "*Non capisco*, master scholar!—I am none. My only science is in church psalmody; it is in vain to conjure me in any learned tongue."

There was an agitation in the tone of this evasion that seemed only to provoke Cromwel's curiosity further. "Methought he said he understood dog or monkish Latin? I would I remembered enow Italian to make my meaning intelligible in his own tongue! But then, mayhap, he would understand only some special dialect. Yet the camp of Charles of Bourbon should have taught me as many as were talked at Babel! Mayhap he can understand somewhat with the aid of signs?—Why wear you that black cap, good stranger, as an ye were in reality the pretty warbler we call by the name?"

"*In pœnitentiam*—I wear my hood in penance, sir, by ordination of my superiors," said Dan Gloria, in a tone of hypocritical humility, and with a furtive glance between his half-closed eyelashes, like a gleam beneath the door of a haunted chamber.

"Are you so handsome that the good monks feared you might win women's eyes to their detriment in the choir?" returned Cromwel.

"Therein is my offence—in women!—and

therefore do I my church offices ever in my hood, whence if mine eyes wander, they cannot allure others into the like sin!" said Dan Gloria.

"And is this penance imposed by your most holy patron the black-visaged prior who brought you hither from Italy, Master Gloria —*in Excelsis*, said you?"

"Those who speak of the Lord Prior Sancgraal, in Westminster—call him so!" returned the præcentor, with petulant vehemence.

"How long are you from Italy—from Rome, master songster?" said Cromwel, not in the least perturbed by this manifestation.

"Why would you know?—More than three years I have been wandering in France and the lowlands of Germania—ere I came under these frowning skies of yours!—I would I were in mine own land again!" said Dan Gloria, with emotion.

"It is but natural—yet I have known some that liked your hot purple heavens as ill as ye like ours! There was a wild wench at the sack of Rome, that shared the tent of a soldier of fortune there, who would oft sing, I mind not the tune, but these are the words, for *she* was not a Roman—she was an Englishwoman!"

said Cromwel, continuing with the following verses, in a very unmusical recitative:—

Alone I fare in a far countrie,
The sky and the earth are strangers to me—
I know them not, and all bright though they be,
I wish I were at home again!

These flowers are fairer far than mine;
The sun overhead has a goldener shine;
And yet for my native land I pine,
And wish I were at home again!

It is not that any will welcome me,
With joy in their smiles, to my own countrie;
But the earth will lie lighter there on me,
I wish I were at home again!

"It is an old ballad here in England, Master Cromwel! I have oft heard it sung here in England," returned the præcentor, with increasing agitation, evinced by a staggering in his tones, and even in his gait.

"Had you been in Rome at the glorious sacking thereof, you would have heard it oft sung by the woman of whom I speak! Dalilah, we called her in the camp, for that she was the paramour of one Ritter Sampson, a stout German lanceknight on the Emperor's part—a damsel whose voice was almost as luscious honey in the sense as yours, master præcentor,"

said Cromwel, watching his interlocutor with quiet but very intense observation.

"*Laus domino*! this is the abbot's gate," said Dan Gloria, without making any reply to the compliment, and seizing a hammer suspended to the oaken door, he knocked at it with the startling energy of a modern postman. "You will find the guest-master within, who will guide your further way," he then observed, and was about precipitately to retire, when Cromwel, with the skill of an old campaigner, suddenly crossed the line of his retreat.

"Nay, master præcentor!" he exclaimed, "let us see that precious visage of thine, ere thou depart, for I love to know my friends again, wherever I meet them, and am bounden to you now in much civility." At the same time he clutched the Italian's shoulder eagerly, and attempted to raise his hood. But the hot blood of Dan Gloria's country was too quickly roused—in fact he seemed to have been on his guard against some such attack, for stepping back and shaking Cromwel's hold violently off, he drew a dagger, concealed in the folds of his robe, and held it aloft as if prepared to strike, if necessary, to secure his liberation. "Nor thou nor any other heretic knave in the world shall compel me to break my vow! Master

clerk, as you are a true priest, and would prevent bloodshed on holy ground, make your fellow desist from his sacrilege!"

Cromwel in his turn was struck with surprise, but not long with any degree of alarm he might at first have felt, for measuring the chorister, with his eyebrows elevated, from head to foot, he burst into a derisive peel of laughter. "Here's a much ado about nothing! our chicken Hildebrand has a sharp spur before he has a hackel to his crest! Nay, Roodspere, it needs not your good offices—let the fool go in the devil's name! We will not trouble to pick the maggots out of the wool till we have cut and quartered the sheep!"

Dan Gloria stayed not to inquire the drift of this ominous phrase, but still holding his weapon raised, retired a few steps, and suddenly took to his heels with the speed of a hunted hare. Roodspere looked in astonishment at the secretary—who replied to the tacit query in a vexed and puzzled manner. "I am sorry I frighted him—fair and softly goes far!—yet I had a fool's reason for what I did—a fancy of my own—which I will tell you anon, for here comes some answerer to our loud petition of entrance."

The portal opened as he spoke, and a monk

of very different characteristics from the chorister Dan Gloria, made his appearance. Nature herself seemed to have given a cringing bend to his frame; an expression of hypocritical humility overspread his demure features, for it was contradicted by the lurking craft on his lips and downcast eyes, which men skilled in physiognomy like Cromwel might readily detect. He wore a purple scapulary, and this ornament with the purse at his girdle denoted that he enjoyed the rank of almoner in the monastery. This functionary inquired their business in smooth and oily accents, without raising his eyes, until Cromwel suddenly seized him by the hand, exclaiming, "Why, brother Quodvultdeus! — master almoner! —in how brief a while dost thou forget a friend of such old standing as Thomas Cromwel?" The startled official raised his modest eyelids, and recognised the person who addressed him with evident alarm. "In God's blessed name, master secretary! I did ever beseech of you to make as if you knew me not, if perchance you saw me among our folk!"

"But there are none here save friends—and friends of great potency, good brother!" replied Cromwel, smiling. "How is it with

you all in the Abbey—for it never was better than now with me?"

"Much as wonted, master secretary!" replied the almoner, still in a timorous undertone. "Our father abbot keeps his faculties as well as an old, bedridden man of fourscore winters and upwards can be expected, Jesu be praised!—And what he lacks the lord prior and master treasurer do abundantly supply—saving that master treasurer's palsy of the neck gains upon him with his grievous fastings and macerations—and our holy prior spends so much of his time in heaven that he sees not how wrong everything is going among us down below!"

"Well, well, we shall amend all ere we have done; for lo ye, brother, in accordance with your repeated privy suggestions, I have brought you a visitor!" replied Cromwel.

"A visitor!—from the Cardinal's court?" repeated the almoner, and certainly not with the apparently anticipated satisfaction.

"Yea, for the office were too invidious and liable to suspicion if fulfilled by any of the brethren of Westminster—else I know none fitter for it than yourself—and methinks you did once as much as say you would accept it, if proffered!" said Cromwel.

"Heaven forfend! heaven forfend I should take on me such state and mastery over my brethren—who already look upon me with peevish eyes!" said Quodvultdeus, with an expression of disappointment he could not altogether dissemble — yet brightening as another thought occurred to him. "But do you indeed come to put one in place and dominion over my lord prior himself?"

"Even so," replied Cromwel. "And upon this business we must see Abbot Islip instantly."

"Alas, he is too old and infirm, Master Cromwel!—as I told you, the prior and treasurer rule everything now!—nay, even Father Gislebert himself gives way to the young man in most things!" said the almoner. "Take your message to them—for they are all in all with us!"

"See you, good brother! these letters are addressed to the Lord Abbot of Westminster, and him will I deliver them unto, and to no other!" returned Cromwel.

"I will inform our reverend father, as is my duty, being his guest-master for the month, of your will!—But he is so childishly busied in the gear that is getting ready for St. Edward's Feast—painting and gilding the great altar-

candles—that I know not if he will lend me any ear," said the almoner. "Meanwhile, master secretary, will it please you, as a most honoured visitant, to ascend to the great chamber of presence?"

Cromwel signified assent, and the almoner led the way into the spacious apartment still known as the Jerusalem Chamber. In those days it was appropriately hung with tapestry, representing in motionless panorama the Holy City and the surrounding country, with the principal events of the life of the Saviour going on simultaneously in the localities identified by the imagination of mediæval faith with those mentioned in the records of the Evangelists. And here Cromwel and Roodspere were left while the almoner hastened to deliver his message.

"They will be in a rare panic anon!" said Cromwel, smiling. "By the Lord Harry, our noble king! I well believe they would poison the very air of the monastery if they knew that I was breathing it, an they could!—This smooth-licking fox, our messenger, Master Roodspere, will be of great use to you as he has already been to me! He would fain hunt with the hounds—yet hath only the courage to run with the hare!"

"But why made you your onset on the Roman chaunter?" said Roodspere, who still remembered the circumstance with surprise.

"Ay, truly!—I will tell you," said Cromwel, also with interest. "Mayhap you may have heard how, some two years agone, I was in Italy, on the Cardinal's service—with the army of the Duke of Bourbon?—I was its paymaster, though but in the guise of a common trooper—I had carried a pike ere then, God wot, which made me semblable enough to my post. We were at outward peace with France, and warred only with our gold!—And so it chanced I was at the storming of Rome, and at all the bloody revel of its sack. Now there was a famous lanceknight among us—a German Lutheran, captain of a free company in the emperor's service—who in the ravaging made no bones of helping himself to a nun of the Magdalens of Mount Aventine—a sisterhood of penitent harlots who do take that fair saint for their patroness and model.—Rather was this one set free to resume her old trade, for she of whom I speak was the wildest and most shameless wassailer amid all the drunken madness of the times! It chanced that I saw this damsel often in the German quarters, and as she was much loved and

trusted by her paramour and divers others of the chief German captains, I showed her the Cardinal's gold, and drew what information I needed from her, to the great profit of our affairs, though dangerously as men gather samphire on the hanging crags! In time we grew into a friendliness, and I discovered she was an Englishwoman. She told me some passages of her history, saying how she was of fair parentage in England, and a wealthy London trader's wife—who had been induced to desert an honest home by a monk who met with her on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, and who was wending to Rome on the business of his order. How she accompanied him thither in pilgrim's weeds—how he grew weary of her, and, feigning to elude the vigilance of certain spies of his brotherhood who, he pretended, watched him—put her in a convent, where she was afterwards detained by force until she submitted, sorely against grain, to become a nun of the ignominious and melancholic order of the Sackcloth Magdalens. She told me that she dwelt nearly four years a prisoner in those gloomy walls, until freed by the sword and flame of the Lutherans! She would never tell me who the monk was, though I offered to get her justice done on him, by the Car-

dinal's means, for his cruel betrayal and abandonment. She said she would take vengeance on him herself—that none other could or should! Neither would she ever avow her own or her husband's name, lest she should further wrong her parentage by the disgrace of her then life! Her captor's name being Sampson, so called from his great strength and bulk, I christened her Dalilah; but the Germans called her the Popess, on account of her altogether favouring Clement in his resistance, and predicting only an ill issue to our sacrilegious siege! For all the harm the church had done her, still her fond superstition might not be undeceived, and still the Pope in his starved castle was to her an assailed divinity! Well, Master Roodspere, this Popess Dalilah had a most exquisite tuneable voice, and was perfect mistress of the Italian pricksong, which she learned among the nuns of Aventine, for I have oft heard her sing the vilest ballads to the most churchmanly chaunts! She had eyes of singular flame and brilliancy, too—a little mad I sometimes thought—and this Dan Gloria's, glittering from his hood—"

But Cromwel's story was broken short by the return of the almoner, with information that the Lord Abbot was ill at ease and un-

prepared to receive strangers; that of late, from his sickness and infirmities, he transacted but little of the business of the monastery; and, in brief, referred the messengers of the legatine court, for full satisfaction, to his dear son and substitute, the Prior Sancgraal.

"Return," said Cromwel, in a vehement tone, "return to your Lord Abbot and tell him that to him and to him only will I deliver my mandate! I will attend him wheresoever he pleases—and add, that if he is too old and frail to perform the duties of his office, it is a sign from heaven—and his grace will take it as such—that he should resign it into stronger hands!"

"Am I to repeat these words to our venerable Lord Abbot—who is indeed very old—and verging on his dotage, if not quite in it?" said the almoner, in a meekly submissive manner.

"Go, and add to that whatever of heavier menace you can devise!" said Cromwel; and Brother Quodvultdeus hastened to obey. "We shall have them all here presently like a flight of frighted crows! I see the rogue laughing in his sleeve," continued the secretary. "Well, this Popess of ours, Master Roodspere—where was I?—You will be wrong if you conclude

any ill of it, but my intercourse with my English espial came to be suspected, in most wrongful guise! It pleased the drunken swine of a German to fall jealous of me; and one day, in person, so foul, that I was fain to keep my distance from his quarters for a long season after. And when at last a shot from Santangelo battered in his heavy skullpiece, I learned that his leman suddenly disappeared, with all the lighter valuables of his plunder, from the camp. She had provoked the Lutheran soldiers by ever denouncing woe and ill-fortune upon them in their siege, and the Ritters quarrelled among themselves for her succession—and so she fled the camp—though indeed some would have it she was murdered in a drunken brawl they fought for her over the shattered carcass of her paramour! — Now why may it not well be—? But, lo ye! our monks are thoroughly awakened now! They have set the alarum-bell a-tolling!"

The almoner re-entered as Cromwel made his abrupt digression with an appearance of great dismay, but with information that the Lord Abbot would cause his principal officers to be summoned, and receive the messengers in person on his day-bed, to which he was confined by his infirmities. The tolling of the

bell, he explained, summoned the monks whose age or offices gave them a voice in the abbey's councils, to the presence of their chief.

"It is well," said Cromwel, "I have oft desired to see the whole witty conclave assembled that condemned Hunne's dead body to the flames! Ay, to the lowest acolyte and servitor—I would fain see ye all! I trow me, some of ye might be advanced more to your deservings! This new glorious præcentor of yours of the number, could the Cardinal hear his sweet notes! Who is he—whence is he—what is he? How chanced it I never saw or heard of this Dan Gloria before?"

"He is an Italian, a most especial favourite of my Lord Prior's, chauntmaster in our choir!—but he is seldom seen by strangers!" replied the almoner with a significance in his speech, and still more in his pauses, that greatly struck Cromwel. "He is of a morose and solitary disposition — scarce speaks our English tongue at all—save when he pleases—and seems, like a cricket, only alive when he is singing! Moreover, though he hath a voice of marvellous sweetness in the chaunts, and hath trained our choristers to sing like the angels—we are not accustomed to such manner of womanish warblers, in

men's garb, in England—and so he shuns all society and companyship—save with his good patron and lord our prior!"

"Ay, so? And doth he frequent him very diligently?" said Cromwel.

"A most constant familiar and attendant, Master Cromwel!" replied the almoner, with a quaint smile. "Not publicly, indeed; but in his hermitage and cell—or when my Lord Prior takes his rounds in the Sanctuary—or visits our manors at Hampstead and Hendon, or elsewhere farther out of sight—we have some score of them in scattered places! My lord chooses this foreigner then for his special attendant, and will talk with him in his own language, and soothe him with all manner of kindness and condescensions—for 'tis a jealous pettish fellow, who lives the life of a tame wolf, that would fain be off again to his wilds! But my lord prior is above all things desirous that our novices and choirmen should learn to chaunt as they do in the Pope's chapel, at Rome!"

"How long has he been among you? and how came he hither?" said Cromwel, with affected carelessness.

"Come St. Edward's Feast again, and he will have been among us one year to a day!

He brought letters, so our prior told us, from a noble Cardinal, his friend in Rome—whom he had prayed to send him such a one!" replied the almoner, with a low, internal laugh that was yet sufficiently audible. "But to my thought, he needed no other recommendation than his merits—and belike had none!—unless our prior and he were older acquaintances than my lord thought proper to allege; doubtless to prevent envy and scandal among our own musicianers—for I never saw any man more suddenly taken as it were with an amazement of surprise than he when, in St. Edward's mass, master præcentor took up the *Gloria* before all the church without permission of any man, and filled it as full of music as the pipes of any organ with its own melodious thunder!"

"Say you so? We must hear more of this anon!" said Cromwel, exchanging a glance with Roodspere that startled him. "And say you too that it is who but he in the monastery now?—as usually chances with a great lord's favourite!"

"Nay, sir, I said with my lord prior only! I love him not and have no cause—for he it was, I verily believe, who gave me the nickname of the weasel! And, laud be to

our lady! Father Gislebert holds him in as infinite misliking and scorn, for I have overheard him many times, with vehement anger and entreaty, desire of the prior his banishment from the abbey!"

"Ay, indeed?" said Cromwel, "Methought the old man seldom differed in opinion from his beloved pupil? But mayhap this Italian hath wit enough to know when he is well—and *will not go?*"

"In very troth," replied the almoner, licking his lips with the inoffensive look of a cat stealing out of a dairy; "in very troth! I have thought of late that Prior Sancgraal would gladly be rid of him, if he could find any fair reason and pretence to send him back to his country!"

"I am glad he hath not — very glad! But here are footsteps—who comes hitherward?" said Cromwel.

"It is Father Gislebert. I know him by the stroke of his staff on the stairs!" replied the almoner. "You should see how he is wasted to a gaunt skeleton, master secretary, that was once as stately of his person, and fit to be an abbey lord, as ever I looked upon! Verily, I cannot but think some black remorse drinks his blood in secret, vampire-like! But

even his beloved nurseling, Prior Sancgraal, esteems his doddering paralysis God's judgment upon him for abandoning holy church's privilege!—for his head is ever shaking as a man's doth that saith 'No,' as he did when he pleaded not guilty of Hunne's death at the king's bar!"

"Yet he hath but raged the more hainously ever since, like a wolf when it hath once tasted blood, against those whom he calls heretics! It is but *lex talionis*—if Hunne's neck was broken in his dungeon!" said Cromwel.

The door opened while he was yet speaking, and admitted the subject of the encomium. It was an old monk with the remains of what had once been a tall and noble person, but which was now bowed by decrepitude almost to the girdle. His countenance was emaciated and withered as if with some consuming inward cark, and his head shook incessantly with palsy of the spine like that of a mandarin on a Chinese toy. Gloom and suspicion were the characteristics of his expression, which might have been taken for the very ideal of an inquisitor's—of a man steeled by his own sufferings to inflict those of others! He leaned on a stout staff of twisted vine-root, resembling a serpent, and he kept one

of his fingers on a bead of the string that hung at his girdle, as if to preserve his place in the annotation of an assigned devotion.

The old monk fixed his anxious and piercing gaze on the strangers before him—though only one of them strictly merited the designation. "It is not unknown to you, Master Cromwel," he said, with little ceremony of salutation, "that our father abbot is sickly and aged, and therefore lays the burdensome government of this house chiefly on younger shoulders. But our lord prior is also at this moment absorpt in a certain supererogatory devotion! —therefore I am his deputy to know your pleasure!"

"It is not *my* pleasure, dan treasurer, but that of my lord legate, I come here to do, whose letters are directed to Abbot Islip's own hands, and I should fail in my duty if I suffered any one else to break their seal!"

"Letters!—from the lord legate?" repeated Gislebert, with a ghastly whitening of his already pallid visage. "What is the matter? What have we done? What new tribulation would my lord cardinal bring upon us, the woful and unoffending children of St. Edward?"

Cromwel persisted in his demand to see

the abbot, in spite of this and every other query and subterfuge which for some time the treasurer pressed upon him almost as craftily as he parried his efforts. Cromwel announced he was aware the abbot was amusing himself with preparations for their approaching festival, and therefore was well enough able to see a messenger on business so important as that he had in hand. He was pleased with the increasing anxiety and agitation of the treasurer, whose head continued to tremble like a pea on a pipestopple—his alarms, according to that acute observer, portending some internal consciousness of the unsoundness of his defences. But the discussion was happily terminated by an unlooked-for event. The doors were thrown widely open, and Abbot Islip himself, surrounded by a numerous cohort of his monks, was borne into the Jerusalem Chamber. He lay upon a couch under a costly coverlet of damask velvet, with his mitre and crozier on either side of the pillows that propped him, which, carried on wooden trestles, and denominated a day-bed, supplied the place of the modern invalid sofa.

A figure walked beside this couch, or rather dragged himself, with a strange serpent-like,

smooth wabble along with it, the first glance at which satisfied Roodspere that he beheld the redoubtable orator who had consigned Hunne's body to the flames, and the now still more formidable and renowned Prior Bigod of Westminster!

END OF VOL. I.

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